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INTRODUCTION

We all like stories. Our earliest, and also the happiest, recollections are the stories our mothers tell us when we are small ; and we are never tired of relating them. Stories are also the earliest form of literature. When man began to speak, he also began to tell stories. Both the East and the West have a rich heritage of tales which have entertained and instructed man through the ages.

The short story has a peculiar appeal for the modern mind. We live in a world which moves ever so fast. We are all rushed. Few of us have the leisure, and even the inclination, to read a long novel. Hence the great vogue the short story enjoys at present. In our own country it is rapidly coming to its own. We have great short story writers, like Rabindra Nath Tagore, Prem Chand, Ismat Chughtai, Krishan Chandar, Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, to mention only a few.

A short story is not a short novel. It has a technique of its own. It delineates a single character, deals with a single event, conveys a single emotion or a series of emotions produced by a single situation. It has a unity a novel cannot have. It admits of no digression. It has a rapidity of movement. Its theme is directly developed and the character swiftly unfolded. It always works up to a climax. Its dialogue is brisk and dramatic. It need not be, rather should not be, didactic. It may be suggestive, but should not preach.

The stories selected in this book cover a wide range of human experience, described by the acknowledged masters of the art. Human nature is much the same the wide world over. The stories here deal with the same life problems, the same desires and emotions, the same hopes and fears, the same superstitions and beliefs, which we also have in our everyday life. The student may note another point. As he passes from Poe and Dickens to the more modern writers, he will notice a difference in style and language. This should enable him to appreciate

the development and beauty of the English language, and also to understand and use the modern language correctly.

The stories here have been edited to suit our Indian moral and cultural ideology, at the same time retaining the spirit and the continuity of the original throughout. It is time that we learn to appreciate, not theoretically but practically, what is best in our culture, and not blindly follow what comes to us from without.

From a school to a college is a big change for a young student, and for a pretty long time he finds himself lost in this more autonomous and free atmosphere. He is shy even to approach a teacher. For his guidance and easy reference some more works by each author are mentioned under 'Principal Works.' To rouse his interest in the author, his life and art, a little more detailed, though simple and readable, biographical sketch is given. Perchance it may lead him to read more about the author, and more of his works.

Notes on the stories are more copious than one usually finds in such an anthology. The main object is to explain the difficulties of language and unfamiliar references. They are not intended to supersede the dictionary. One should always have a good English dictionary, like The Concise Oxford Dictionary, and consult it frequently.

Exercises are designed not merely from the point of view of examination, but also to stimulate thought. One must learn to think for oneself. That is most important. It means effort. It means hard work. But who has ever attained anything without them. There is no short cut to success.

In the end it is hoped that the book will entertain and serve the young student for whom it is primarily meant.

Lahore,
September, 1946.

SAADAT ALI KHAN.



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THREE SUNDAYS IN A WEEK

EDGAR ALLAN POE

"You hard-headed, obstinate, rusty, crusty, musty, old savage!" said I, in fancy, one afternoon, to my grand-uncle Rungudgeon.....shaking my fist at him in imagination.

Only in imagination. The fact is, some trivial discrepancy did exist, just then, between what I said and what I had not the courage to say.....between what I did and what I had half a mind to do.

The old porpoise, as I opened the drawing-room door, was sitting with his feet upon the mantelpiece, and a bumper of port in his paw.

"My dear uncle," said I, closing the door gently, and approaching him with the blandest of smiles, "You are always so very kind and considerate, and have evinced your benevolence in so many.....so very many ways.....that.....that I feel I have only to suggest this little point to you once more to make sure of your full acquiescence."

"Hem!" said he, "good boy! go on!"

"I am sure, my dearest uncle (you confounded old rascal!), that you have no design really, seriously, to oppose my union with Kate. This is merely a joke of yours I know.....ha! ha! ha!.....how very pleasant you are at times."

"Ha! ha! ha!" said he, "curse you! yes!"

"To be sure.....of course! I *knew* you were jesting.

Now, uncle, all that Kate and myself wish at present, is that you would oblige us with your advice as.....as regards the time.....you know, uncle.....in short, when will it be most convenient for yourself, that the wedding shallshall.....come off, you know?"

"Come off, you scoundrel!.....what do you mean by that?.....Better wait till it goes on."

"Ha! ha! ha!.....he! he! he!.....hi! hi!.....ho! ho! ho!.....hu! hu! hu!.....oh, that's good!.....oh, that's capital.....*such* a wit! But all we want just now, you know, uncle, is that you would indicate the time precisely."

"Ah!.....precisely?"

"Yes, uncle.....that is, if it would be quite agreeable to yourself."

"Wouldn't it answer, Bobby, if I were to leave it at random.....some time within a year or so, for example?must I say precisely?"

"If you please, uncle.....precisely."

"Well, then, Bobby, my boy.....you're a fine fellow, aren't you?.....since you will have the exact time I'llwhy I'll oblige you for once."

"Dear uncle!"

"Hush, sir!" (Drowning my voice)....."I'll oblige you for once. You shall have my consent.....and *the plum*, we mus'n't forget the plum.....let me see! when shall it be? Today's Sunday.....isn't it? Well, then, you shall be married precisely.....precisely, now mind!.....*when three Sundays come together in a week*.....but not *till* thenyou young scapegrace.....not till then, if I die for it. You know me.....I'm a man of my word.....now be

off!" Here he swallowed his bumper of port, while I rushed from the room in despair.

A very "fine old English gentleman," was my grand-uncle Rumgudgeon, but he had his weak points. He was a little, pursy, pompous, passionate semicircular somebody, with a red nose, a thick skull, a long purse, and a strong sense of his own consequence. With the best heart in the world, he contrived, through a predominant whim of contradiction, to earn for himself, among those who only knew him surperficially, the character of a curmudgeon. To every request, a positive "No!" was his immediate answer; but in the end.....in the long, lond end.....there were exceedingly few requests which he refused. Against all attacks upon his purse he made the most sturdy defence; but the amount extorted from him, at last, was generally in direct ratio with the length of the siege and the stubbornness of the resistance. In charity no one gave more liberally or with a worse grace.

For the fine arts, and especially for the belles-lettres, he entertained a profound contempt. Thus my own inkling for the Muses had excited his entire displeasure. He assured me one day, when I asked him for a new copy of Horace, that he was "a nasty poet for nothing fit".....a remark which I took in high dudgeon. His repugnance to "the humanities" had, also, much increased of late, by an accidental bias in favour of what he supposed to be natural science. Somebody had accosted him in the street, mistaking him for no less a personage than Doctor Dubble L. Dee, the lecturer on quack physics. This set him off at a tangent; and just at the epoch of this storyfor story it is getting to be after all.....my grand-

uncle Rungudgeon was accessible only upon points which happened to agree with science. For the rest, he laughed with his arms and legs, and his politics were stubborn and easily understood. He thought, with Horsley, that "the people have nothing to do with the laws but to obey them."

I had lived with the old gentleman all my life. My parents, in dying, had bequeathed me to him as a rich legacy. I believe the old villain loved me as his own child.....nearly if not quite as well as he loved Kate..... but it was a dog's existence that he led me, after all. From five to fifteen, he threatened me, hourly, with the House of Correction. From fifteen to twenty, not a day passed in which he did not promise to cut me off with a shilling. I was a sad dog. In Kate, however, I had a firm friend, and I knew it. She was a good girl, and told me very sweetly that I might have her (plum and all) whenever I could badger my grand-uncle Rungudgeon, into the necessary consent. Poor girl.....she was barely fifteen, and without this consent, her little amount in the funds was not come-at-able until five immeasurable summers had "dragged their slow length along." What, then, to do? At fifteen, or even at twenty-one, five years in prospect are very much the same as five hundred. In vain we besieged the old gentleman with importunities. In his heart he wished for nothing more ardently than our union. He had made up his mind to this all along. In fact, he would have given ten thousand pounds from his own pocket (Kate's plum was *her own*) if he could have invented anything like an excuse for complying with our very natural wishes. But then we had been so imprudent as to broach the subject ourselves. Not to

oppose it under such circumstances, I sincerely believe, was not in his power.

I have said already that he had his weak points ; but in speaking of these, I must not be understood as referring to his obstinacy, which was one of his strong points. When I mention his weakness I have allusion to a bizarre old-womanish superstition which besets him. He was great in dreams, portents. He was excessively punctilious, too, upon small points of honour, and after his own fashion, was a man of his words, beyond doubt. This was, in fact, one of his hobbies. The *spirit* of his vows he made no scruple of setting at naught, but the *letter* was a bond inviolable. Now it was this latter peculiarity in his disposition, of which Kate's ingenuity enabled us one fine day, not long after our interview in the dining-room, to take a very unexpected advantage, and this I will sum up in a few words what constitutes the whole pith of the story.

It happened then.....so the Fates ordered it.....that among the naval acquaintances of my betrothed, were two gentlemen who had just set foot upon the shores of England, after a year's absence, each, in foreign travel. In company with these gentlemen, my cousin and I, paid uncle Rumgudgeon a visit on the afternoon of Sunday, October the tenth,.....just three weeks after the memorable decision which had so cruelly defeated our hopes. For about half an hour the conversation ran upon ordinary topics ; but at last, we contrived, quite naturally, to give it the following turn :

Capt. Pratt. " Well I have been absent just one year. Just one year today, as I live.....let me see ! yes !.....

this is October tenth. You remember, Mr. Rungudgeon, I called this day year to bid you good-bye. And by the way, it does seem something like a coincidence.....does it not.....that our friend, Captain Smitherton, here, has been absent exactly a year also.....a year today!"

Smitherton. "Yes! just one year to a fraction. You will remember, Mr. Rungudgeon, that I called with Captain Pratt on this very day, last year, to pay my parting respects."

Uncle. "Yes, yes, yes.....I remember it very wellvery queer indeed! Both of you gone just one year. A very strange coincidence indeed! Just what Doctor Dubble L. Dee would denominate an extraordinary concurrence of events. Doctor Dub....."

Kate. (Interrupting.) "To be sure, papa, it is something strange; but then Captain Pratt and Captain Smitherton didn't go altogether the same route, and that makes a difference, you know."

Uncle. "I don't know any such thing you huzzy! How should I? I think it only makes the matter more remarkable, Doctor Dubble L. Dee....."

Kate. "Why, papa, Captain Pratt went round Cape Horn, and Captain Smitherton doubled the Cape of Good Hope."

Uncle. "Precisely!.....the one went east and the other went west, you jade, and they both have gone quite round the world. By the by, Doctor Dubble L. Dee....."

Myself. (Hurriedly.) "Captain Pratt, you must come and spend the evening with us tomorrow.....you and Smitherton.....you can tell us all about your voyage, and we'll have a game of whist and....."

Pratt. "Whist, my dear fellow.....you forget. Tomorrow will be Sunday. Some other evening....."

Kate. "Oh, no, fie !.....Robert's not quite so bad as that. Today's Sunday."

Uncle. "To be sure.....to be sure !"

Pratt. "I beg both your pardons.....but I can't be so much mistaken. I know tomorrow's Sunday, because....."

Smitherton. (Much surprised.) "What are you all thinking about ? Wasn't yesterday Sunday, I should like to know ?"

All. "Yesterday, indeed, you are out !"

Uncle. "Today's Sunday, I say.....don't I know ?"

Pratt. "Oh no !.....tomorrow's Sunday."

Smitherton. "You are all mad.....every one of you. I am as positive that yesterday was Sunday as I am that I sit upon this chair."

Kate. (Jumping up eagerly.) "I see it.....I see it all. Papa, this is a judgment upon you, about.....about you know what. Let me alone, and I'll explain it all in a minute. It's a very simple thing indeed. Captain Smitherton says that yesterday was Sunday : so it was ; he is right. Cousin Bobby, and uncle and I say that today is Sunday : so it is ; we are right. Captain Pratt maintains that tomorrow will be Sunday : so it will ; he is right, too. The fact is, we are all right and thus three Sundays have come together in a week."

Smitherton. (After a pause.) "By the by, Pratt, Kate has us completely. What fools we two are ! Mr. Rumgudgeon, the matter stands thus ; the earth, you know, is twenty-four thousand miles in circumference. Now this

globe of the earth turns upon its own axis.....revolves..... spins round.....these twenty-four thousand miles of extent, going from west to east, in precisely twenty-four hours. Do you understand, Mr. Rungudgeon?.....”

Uncle. “To be sure.....to be sure.....Doctor Dub...”

Smitherton. (Drowning his voice.) “Well, sir; that is at the rate of one thousand miles per hour. Now, suppose that I sail from this position a thousand miles east. Of course I anticipate the rising of the sun here at London by just one hour. I see the sun rise one hour before you do. Proceeding, in the same direction, yet another thousand miles, I anticipate the rising by two hours.....another thousand, and I anticipate it by three hours, and so on, until I go entirely round the globe, and back to this spot, when, having gone twenty-four thousand miles east, I anticipate the rising of the London sun by no less than twenty-four hours; that is to say, I am a day *in advance* of your time. Understand, eh!”

Uncle. “But Dubble L. Dee.....”

Smitherton. (Speaking very loud.) “Captain Pratt, on the contrary, when he had sailed a thousand miles west of this position, was an hour, and when he had sailed twenty-four thousand miles west, was twenty-four hours, or one day *behind* the time at London. Thus, with me, yesterday was Sunday.....thus, with you, today is Sunday.....and thus, with Pratt, tomorrow will be Sunday. And what is more, Mr. Rungudgeon, it is positively clear that we are *all right*, for there can be no philosophical reason assigned why the idea of one of us should have preference over that of the other.”

Uncle. "My eyes!.....well, Kate.....well, Bobby!
.....this is a judgment upon me, as you say. But I am
a man of my word.....mark that! you shall have her, boy,
(Plum and all,) when you please. Done up, by Jove!
Three Sundays all in a row! I'll go, and take Dubble L.
Dee's opinion upon *that*."

THE STORY OF THE GOBLINS WHO STOLE A SEXTON

CHARLES DICKENS

In an old abbey town, down in this part of the country, a long, long while ago—so long, that the story must be a true one, because our great-grandfathers implicitly believed it—there officiated as sexton and grave-digger in the churchyard, one Gabriel Grub. It by no means follows that because a man is a sexton, and constantly surrounded by the emblems of mortality, therefore he should be a morose and melancholy man; your undertakers are the merriest fellows in the world; and I once had the honour of being on intimate terms with a mute, who in private life, and off duty, was as comical and jocose a little fellow as ever chirped out a devil-may-care song without a hitch in his memory. But notwithstanding these precedents to the contrary, Gabriel Grub was an ill-conditioned, crossgrained, surly fellow—a morose and lonely man, who consorted with nobody but himself, and an old wicker bottle which fitted into his large deep waistcoat pocket—and who eyed each merry face, as it passed him by, with such a deep scowl of malice and ill-humour, as it was difficult to meet without feeling something the worse for.

A little before twilight, one Christmas Eve, Gabriel shouldered his spade, lighted his lantern, and betook himself towards the old churchyard; for he had got a grave to finish by next morning, and feeling very low, he thought it might raise his spirits, perhaps, if he went on with his

work at once. As he went his way, up the ancient street, he saw the cheerful light of the blazing fires gleam through the old casements, and heard the loud laugh and the cheerful shouts of those who were assembled around them ; he marked the bustling preparations for next day's cheer, and smelled the numerous savoury odours consequent thereupon, as they steamed up from the kitchen windows in clouds. All this was gall and wormwood to the heart of Gabriel Grub ; and when groups of children bounded out of the houses, tripped across the road, and were met, before they could knock at the opposite door, by half a dozen curly-headed little rascals, who crowded round them as they flocked upstairs to spend the evening in their Christmas games, Gabriel smiled grimly, and clutched the handle of his spade with a firmer grasp, as he thought of measles, scarlet fever, thrush, whooping cough, and a good many other sources of consolation besides.

In this happy frame of mind, Gabriel strode along, returning a short, sullen growl to the good-humoured greetings of such of his neighbours as now and then passed him until he turned into the dark lane which led to the churchyard. Now, Gabriel had been looking forward to reaching the dark lane, because it was, generally speaking, a nice, gloomy, mournful place, into which the townspeople did not much care to go except in broad daylight, and when the sun was shining ; consequently, he was not a little indignant to hear a young urchin roaring out some jolly song about a merry Christmas, in this very sanctuary, which had been called Coffin Lane ever since the days of the old abbey, and the time of the shaven-headed monks. As Gabriel walked on, and the voice drew

nearer, he found it proceeded from a small boy, who was hurrying along, to join one of the little parties in the old street, and who, partly to keep himself company, and partly to prepare himself for the occasion, was shouting out the song at the highest pitch of his lungs. So Gabriel waited until the boy came up, and then dodged him into a corner, and rapped him over the head with his lantern five or six times, just to teach him to modulate his voice. And as the boy hurried away with his hand to his head, singing quite a different sort of tune, Gabriel Grub chuckled very heartily to himself, and entered the churchyard, locking the gate behind him.

He took off his coat, set down his lantern, and getting into the unfinished grave, worked at it for an hour or so with right goodwill. But the earth was hardened with the frost, and it was no very easy matter to break it up, and shovel it out ; and although there was a moon, it was a very young one and shed little light upon the grave, which was in the shadow of the church. At any other time, these obstacles would have made Gabriel Grub very moody and miserable, but he was so well pleased with having stopped the small boy's singing that he took little heed of the scanty progress he had made, and looked down into the grave, when he had finished work for the night, with grim satisfaction.

“ Ho ! ho ! ” laughed Gabriel Grub, as he sat himself down on a flat tombstone which was a favourite resting-place of his, and drew forth his wicker bottle. “ A coffin at Christmas ! A Christmas box ! Ho ! ho ! ho ! ”

“ Ho ! ho ! ho ! ” repeated a voice which sounded close behind him.

Gabriel paused, in some alarm, in the act of raising the wicker bottle to his lips, and looked round. The bottom of the oldest grave about him was not more still and quiet than the churchyard in the pale moonlight. The cold hoar-frost glistened on the tombstones, and sparkled like rows of gems, among the stone carvings of the old church. The snow lay hard and crisp upon the ground ; and spread over the thickly-strewn mounds of earth, so white and smooth a cover, that it seemed as if corpses lay there, hidden only by their winding sheets. Not the faintest rustle broke the profound tranquillity of the solemn scene. Sound itself appeared to be frozen up, all was so cold and still.

“ It was the echoes,” said Gabriel Grub, raising the bottle to his lips again.

“ It was *not*,” said a deep voice.

Gabriel started up, and stood rooted to the spot with astonishment and terror ; for his eyes rested on a form that made his blood run cold.

Seated on an upright tombstone, close to him, was a strange unearthly figure, whom Gabriel felt at once, was no being of this world. His long, fantastic legs which might have reached the ground, were cocked up, and crossed after a quaint, fantastic fashion ; his sinewy arms were bare ; and his hands rested on his knees. On his short, round body, he wore a close covering ; a short cloak dangled at his back ; the collar was cut into curious peaks, which served the goblin in lieu of ruff or neckerchief ; and his shoes curled up at his toes into long points. On his head, he wore a broad-brimmed hat, garnished with a single feather. The hat was covered with the white

frost ; and the goblin looked as if he had sat on the same tombstone very comfortably, for two or three hundred years. He was sitting perfectly still ; his tongue was put out, as if in derision ; and he was grinning at Gabriel Grub with such a grin as only a goblin could call up.

“ It was *not* the echoes,” said the goblin.

Gabriel Grub was paralysed, and could make no reply.

“ What do you do here on Christmas Eve ?” said the goblin sternly.

“ I came to dig a grave, sir,” stammered Gabriel Grub.

“ What man wanders among graves and churchyards on such a night as this ?” cried the goblin.

“ Gabriel Grub ! Gabriel Grub !” screamed a wild chorus of voices that seemed to fill the churchyard. Gabriel looked fearfully round—nothing was to be seen.

“ What have you got in that bottle ?” said the goblin.

“ Hollands, sir,” replied the sexton, trembling more than ever ; for he had bought it of the smugglers, and he thought that perhaps his questioner might be in the excise department of the goblins.

“ Who drinks Hollands alone, and in a churchyard, on such a night as this ?” said the goblin.

“ Gabriel Grub ! Gabriel Grub !” exclaimed the wild voices again.

The goblin leered maliciously at the terrified sexton, and then raising his voice, exclaimed—

“ And who then, is our fair and lawful prize ?”

To this inquiry the invisible chorus replied in a strain that sounded like the voices of many choristers singing

to the mighty swell of the old church organ—a strain that seemed borne to the sexton's ears upon a wild wind, and to die away as it passed onward ; but the burden of the reply was still the same, “ Gabriel Grub ! Gabriel Grub ! ”

The goblin grinned a broader grin than before, as he said, “ Well Gabriel, what do you say to this ? ”

The sexton gasped for breath.

“ What do you think of this, Gabriel ? ” said the goblin, kicking up his feet in the air on either side of the tombstone, and looking at the turned-up points with as much complacency as if he had been contemplating the most fashionable pair of Wellingtons in all Bond Street.

“ It's—it's—very curious, sir,” replied the sexton, half dead with fright ; “ very curious, and very pretty, but I think I'll go back and finish my work, sir, if you please . ”

“ Work ! ” said the goblin, “ What work ? ”

“ The grave, sir ; making the grave,” stammered the sexton.

“ Oh, the grave, eh ? ” said the goblin ; “ who makes graves at a time when all other men are merry, and takes a pleasure in it ? ”

Again the mysterious voices replied, “ Gabriel Grub ! Gabriel Grub ! ”

“ I am afraid my friends want you, Gabriel,” said the goblin, thrusting his tongue farther into his cheek than ever—and a most astonishing tongue it was—“ I'm afraid my friends want you, Gabriel,” said the goblin.

“ Under favour, sir,” replied the horror-stricken sexton, “ I don't think they can, sir ; they don't know me, sir ; I don't think the gentlemen have ever seen me, sir.”

“ Oh, yes, they have,” replied the goblin ; “ we know the man with the sulky face and grim scowl, that came down the street tonight, throwing his evil looks at the children, and grasping his burying-spade the tighter. We know the man who struck the boy in the envious malice of his heart, because the boy could be merry, and he could not. We know him, we know him.”

Here, the goblin gave a loud, shrill laugh which the echoes returned twentyfold ; and throwing his legs up in the air, stood upon his head, on the narrow edge of the tombstone, whence he threw a somerset with extraordinary agility, right to the sexton’s feet, at which he planted himself in the attitude in which tailors generally sit upon the shopboard.

“ I—I—am afraid I must leave you, sir,” said the sexton, making an effort to move.

“ Leave us !” said the goblin, “ Gabriel Grub going to leave us. Ho ! ho ! ho !”

As the goblin laughed, the sexton observed, for one instant, a brilliant illumination within the windows of the church, as if the whole building were lighted up ; it disappeared, the organ pealed forth a lively air, and whole troops of goblins, the very counterpart of the first one, poured into the churchyard, and began playing at leap-frog with the tombstones, never stopping for an instant to take breath, but ‘ overing ’ the highest among them, one after the other, with the most marvellous dexterity. The first goblin was a most astonishing leaper, and none of the others could come near him.

At last the game reached to a most exciting pitch ; the organ played quicker and quicker, and the goblins

leaped faster and faster, coiling themselves up, rolling head over heels upon the ground, and bounding over the tombstones like footballs. The sexton's brain whirled round with the rapidity of the motion he beheld, and his legs reeled beneath him, as the spirits flew before his eyes ; when the goblin king, suddenly darting towards him, laid his hand upon his collar, and sank with him through the earth.

When Gabriel Grub had had time to fetch his breath, which the rapidity of his descent had for the moment taken away, he found himself in what appeared to be a large cavern, surrounded on all sides by crowds of goblins, ugly and grim ; in the centre of the room, on an elevated seat, was stationed his friend of the churchyard ; and close behind him stood Gabriel Grub himself, without power of motion.

"Cold, tonight," said the king of the goblins, "very cold. A glass of something warm here!"

At this command, half a dozen officious goblins, with a perpetual smile upon their faces, whom Gabriel Grub imagined to be courtiers, on that account, hastily disappeared, and presently returned with a goblet of liquid-fire, which they presented to the king.

"Ah!" cried the goblin, whose cheeks and throat were transparent, as he tossed down the flame, "this warms one, indeed! Bring a bumper of the same, for Mr. Grub."

It was in vain for the unfortunate sexton to protest that he was not in the habit of taking anything warm at night ; one of the goblins held him while another poured the blazing liquid down his throat ; the whole assembly

screeched with laughter, as he coughed and choked, and wiped away the tears which gushed plentifully from his eyes, after swallowing the burning draught.

“And now,” said the king, fantastically poking the corner of his hat into the sexton’s eye, and thereby occasioning him the most exquisite pain—“and now, show the man of misery and gloom, a few of the pictures from our own great storehouse !”

As the goblin said this, a thick cloud which obscured the remoter end of the cavern rolled gradually away, and disclosed, apparently at a great distance, a small and scantily furnished, but neat and clean apartment. A crowd of little children were gathered round a bright fire, clinging to their mother’s gown, and gambolling around her chair. The mother occasionally rose, and drew aside the window-curtain, as if to look for some expected object ; a frugal meal was ready spread upon the table ; and an elbow chair was placed near the fire. A knock was heard at the door ; the mother opened it, and the children crowded round her, and clapped their hands for joy, as their father entered. He was wet and weary, and shook the snow from his garments, as the children crowded round him, and, seizing his cloak, hat, stick, and gloves, with busy zeal, ran with them from the room. Then, as he sat down to his meal before the fire, the children climbed about his knee, and the mother sat by his side, and all seemed happiness and comfort.

Now the light cloud passed across the picture, and the subject changed. The father and mother were old and helpless now, and the number of those about them was diminished more than half, but content and cheerfulness

sat on every face, and beamed in every eye, as they crowded round the fireside, and told and listened to old stories of earlier and bygone days. Slowly and peacefully, the father sank into the grave, and, soon after, the sharer of all his cares and troubles followed him to a place of rest. The few who yet survived them, kneeled by their tomb, and watered the green turf which covered it with their tears; then rose, and turned away, sadly and mournfully, but not with bitter cries, or despairing lamentations, for they knew that they should one day meet again; and once more they mixed with the busy world, and their content and cheerfulness were restored. The cloud settled upon the picture, and concealed it from the sexton's view.

"What do you think of *that*?" said the goblin, turning his large face towards Gabriel Grub.

Gabriel murmured out something about its being very pretty, and looked somewhat ashamed, as the goblin bent his fiery eyes upon him.

"*You* a miserable man!" said the goblin in a tone of excessive contempt. "*You!*" He appeared disposed to add more but indignation choked his utterance, so he lifted up one of his very pliable legs, and flourishing it above his head a little, to insure his aim, administered a good sound kick to Gabriel Grub; immediately after which, all the goblins in waiting crowded round the wretched sexton, and kicked him without mercy, according to the established and invariable custom of courtiers upon earth, who kick whom royalty kicks, and hug whom royalty hugs.

"Show him some more!" said the king of the goblins.

At these words, the cloud was dispelled, and a rich and beautiful landscape was disclosed to view—there is just such another, to this day, within half a mile of the old abbey town. The sun shone from out the clear blue sky, the water sparkled beneath his rays, and the trees looked greener, and the flowers more gay, beneath its cheering influence. The water rippled on with a pleasant sound, the trees rustled in the light wind that murmured among their leaves, the birds sang upon the boughs, and the lark carolled on high her welcome to the morning. Yes, it was morning—the bright balmy morning of summer ; the minutest leaf, the smallest blade of grass was instinct with life. The ant crept forth to her daily toil, the butterfly fluttered and basked in the warm rays of the sun ; myriads of insects spread their transparent wings, and revelled in their brief but happy existence. Man walked forth, elated with the scene ; and all was brightness and splendour.

“ You a miserable man ! ” said the king of the goblins, in a more contemptuous tone than before. And again the king of the goblins gave his leg a flourish ; again it descended on the shoulders of the sexton ; and again the attendant goblins imitated the example of their chief.

Many a time the cloud went and came, and many a lesson it taught to Gabriel Grub, who, although his shoulders smarted with pain from the frequent applications of the goblin’s feet thereunto, looked on with an interest that nothing could diminish. He saw that men who worked hard, and earned their scanty bread with lives of labour, were cheerful and happy ; and that to the most ignorant, the sweet face of Nature was a never-failing source

of cheerfulness and joy. He saw those who had been delicately nurtured, and tenderly brought up, cheerful under privations, and superior to suffering, that would have crushed many of a rougher grain, because they bore within their own bosoms the materials of happiness, contentment, and peace. He saw that women, the tenderest and most fragile of all God's creatures, were the oftenest superior to sorrow, adversity, and distress; and he saw that it was because they bore, in their own heart, an inexhaustible well-spring of affection and devotion. Above all, he saw that men like himself, who snarled at the mirth and cheerfulness of others, were the foulest weeds on the fair surface of the earth; and setting all the good of the world against the evil, he came to the conclusion that it was a very decent and respectable sort of world after all. No sooner had he formed it, than the cloud which had closed over the last picture, seemed to settle on his senses, and lull him to repose. One by one, the goblins faded from his sight; and, as the last one disappeared, he sank to sleep.

The day had broken when Gabriel Grub awoke, and found himself lying at full length on the flat gravestone in the churchyard, with the wicker bottle lying empty by his side, and his coat, spade, and lantern, all well whitened by the last night's frost, scattered on the ground. The stone on which he had first seen the goblin seated, stood bolt upright before him, and the grave at which he had worked, the night before, was not far off. At first, he began to doubt the reality of his adventures, but the acute pain in his shoulders when he attempted to rise, assured him that the kicking of the goblins was

certainly not ideal. He was staggered again, by observing no traces of footsteps in the snow on which the goblins had played at leap-frog with the gravestones, but he speedily accounted for this circumstance when he remembered that, being spirits, they would leave no visible impression behind them. So, Gabriel Grub got on his feet as well as he could, for the pain in his back ; and brushing the frost off his coat, put it on, and turned his face towards the town.

But he was an altered man, and he could not bear the thought of returning to a place where his repentance would be scoffed at, and his reformation disbelieved. He hesitated for a few moments ; and then turned away to wander where he might, and seek his bread elsewhere.

The lantern, the spade, and the wicker bottle, were found, that day, in the churchyard. There were a great many speculations about the sexton's fate, at first, but it was speedily determined that he had been carried away by the goblins ; and there were not wanting some very credible witnesses who had distinctly seen him whisked through the air on the back of a chestnut horse blind of one eye, with the hind-quarters of a lion and the tail of a bear. At length all this was devoutly believed ; and the new sexton used to exhibit to the curious, for a trifling emolument, a good-sized piece of the church weathercock which had been accidentally kicked off by the aforesaid horse in his aerial flight, and picked up by himself in the churchyard a year or two afterwards.

Unfortunately, these stories were somewhat disturbed by the unlooked-for re-appearance of Gabriel Grub himself, some ten years afterwards, a ragged,

contented, rheumatic old man. He told his story to the clergyman, and also to the mayor, and in course of time it began to be received as a matter of history in which form it has continued down to this very day. The believers in the weathercock tale, having misplaced their confidence once, were not easily prevailed upon to part with it again, so they looked as wise as they could, shrugged their shoulders, touched their foreheads, and murmured something about Gabriel Grub having drunk all the Hollands, and then fallen asleep on the flat tombstone ; and they affected to explain what he supposed he had witnessed in the goblin's cavern by saying that he had seen the world, and grown wiser. But this opinion, which was by no means a popular one at any time, gradually died off ; and be the matter how it may, as Gabriel Grub was afflicted with rheumatism to the end of his days, this story has at least one moral, if it teach no better one—and that is, that if a man turn sulky and drink by himself at Christmas time, he may make up his mind to be not a bit the better for it, let the spirits be never so good, or let them be even as many degrees beyond proof, as those which Gabriel Grub saw in the goblin's cavern.

MIGGLES

BRET HARTE

We were eight including the driver. We had not spoken during the passage of the last six miles, since the jolting of the heavy vehicle over the roughening road had spoiled the Judge's last poetical quotation. The tall man beside the Judge was asleep, his arm passed through the swaying strap and his head resting upon it. The French lady on the back seat was asleep too. The lady from Virginia City was travelling with her husband. There was no sound but the rattling of wheels and the dash of rain upon the roof. Suddenly the stage stopped and we became dimly aware of voices. The driver was evidently in the midst of an exciting colloquy with some one in the road,—a colloquy of which such fragments as "bridge gone," "twenty feet of water," "can't pass," were occasionally distinguishable above the storm. Then came a lull, and a mysterious voice from the road shouted the parting adjuration—

"Try Miggles's."

Who and where was Miggles? The Judge, our authority, did not remember the name, and he knew the country thoroughly. The Washoe traveller thought Miggles must keep a hotel. We only knew that we were stopped by high water in front and rear, and that Miggles was our rock of refuge. A ten minutes' splashing through a tangled by-road, scarcely wide enough for the stage, and we drew up before a barred gate in a wide stone wall

or fence about eight feet high. Evidently Miggles's, and evidently Miggles did not keep a hotel.

The driver got down and tried the gate. It was securely locked.

"Miggles! O Miggles!"

No answer.

"Miggles! You Miggles!" continued the driver, with rising wrath.

"Migglesy!" joined in the expressman persuasively, "O Miggy! Mig!"

But no reply came from the apparently insensate Miggles. The Judge, who had finally got the window down, put his head out and propounded a series of questions, which if answered categorically would have undoubtedly elucidated the whole mystery, but which the driver evaded by replying that "if we didn't want to sit in the coach all night we had better rise up and sing out for Miggles."

So we rose up and called on Miggles in chorus, then separately. And when we had finished, a Hibernian fellow-passenger from the roof called for "Maygells!" whereat we all laughed. While we were laughing the driver cried "Shoo!"

We listened. To our infinite amazement the chorus of "Miggles" was repeated from the other side of the wall, even to the final and supplemental "Maygells."

"Extraordinary echo!" said the Judge.

"Extraordinary d—d skunk!" roared the driver, contemptuously. "Come out of that, Miggles, and show yourself! Be a man, Miggles! Don't hide in the dark; I wouldn't if I were you, Miggles," continued Yuba Bill, now dancing about in an excess of fury.

"Miggles!" continued the voice, "O Miggles!"

"My good man! Mr. Myghail!" said the Judge. "Consider the inhospitality of refusing shelter from the inclemency of the weather to helpless females. Really, my dear sir—" But a succession of "Miggles," ending in a burst of laughter, drowned his voice.

Yuba Bill hesitated no longer. Taking a heavy stone from the road, he battered down the gate and with the expressman entered the enclosure. We followed. Nobody was to be seen. In the gathering darkness all that we could distinguish was that we were in a garden, and before a long rambling wooden building.

"Do you know this Miggles?" asked the Judge of Yuba Bill.

"No, nor don't want to," said Bill shortly.

"But, my dear sir," expostulated the Judge, as he thought of the barred gate.

"Lookee here," said Yuba Bill, with fine irony, "hadn't you better go back and sit in the coach till yer introduced? I'm going in," and he pushed open the door of the building.

A long room, lighted only by the embers of a fire that was dying on the large hearth at its farther extremity; the walls curiously papered, and the flickering firelight bringing out its grotesque pattern; somebody sitting in a large arm-chair by the fireplace. All this we saw as we crowded together into the room after the driver and expressman.

"Hello! be you Miggles?" said Yuba Bill to the solitary occupant.

The figure neither spoke nor stirred. Yuba Bill walked wrathfully towards it and turned the eye of his

coach-lantern upon its face. It was a man's face, prematurely old and wrinkled. He had large eyes which wandered from Bill's face to the lantern, and finally fixed their gaze on that luminous object without further recognition.

Bill restrained himself with an effort.

"Miggles! be you deaf? You ain't dumb anyhow, you know?" and Yuba Bill shook the insensate figure by the shoulder.

To our great dismay, as Bill removed his hand, the venerable stranger apparently collapsed, sinking into half-his size and an undistinguishable heap of clothing.

"Well, dern my skin," said Bill, looking appealingly at us, and hopelessly retiring from the contest.

The Judge now stepped forward, and we lifted the man back into his original position. Bill was dismissed with the lantern to search outside, for it was evident that, from the helplessness of this solitary man, there must be attendants near at hand, and we all drew around the fire. The Judge, who had regained his authority, —standing before us with his back to the hearth—charged us, as an imaginary jury as follows:—

"It is evident that our distinguished friend here has suffered some premature abatement of his mental and physical faculties. Whether he is really the Miggles—"

Here he was interrupted by "Miggles! O Miggles! Migglesy! Mig!" and, in fact, the whole chorus of Miggles in very much the same key as it had once before been delivered unto us.

We gazed at each other for a moment in some alarm. The Judge, in particular, vacated his position quickly,

as the voice seemed to come directly over his shoulder. The cause, however, was soon discovered in a large magpie who was perched upon a shelf over the fireplace. It was, undoubtedly, his voice which we had heard in the road, and our friend in the chair was not responsible for the discourtesy. Yuba Bill, who re-entered the room after an unsuccessful search, was loath to accept the explanation, and still eyed the helpless sitter with suspicion. He had found a shed in which he had put up his horses, but he came back dripping and sceptical. "Thar ain't nobody but him within ten mile of the shanty."

Bill had scarcely ceased growling before we heard a quick step upon the porch, the trailing of a wet skirt, the door was flung open, and with a flash of white teeth, a sparkle of dark eyes, and an utter absence of ceremony or diffidence, a young woman entered, shut the door, and, panting, leaned back against it.

"Oh, if you please, I'm Miggles!"

And this was Miggles! this bright-eyed, full-throated young woman, whose wet gown of coarse blue stuff could not hide her beauty,—this was Miggles, laughing at us, too, in the most airy, frank, offhand manner imaginable.

"You see, boys," said she, quite out of breath, and holding one little hand against her side, quite unheeding the speechless discomfiture of our party,—“You see, boys, I was mor'n two miles away when you passed down the road. I thought you might pull up here, and so I ran the whole way, knowing nobody was home but Jim—and——and—I'm out of breath—and—that lets me out.”

And here Miggles caught her dripping oil-skin hat from her head, attempted to put back her hair, dropped

two hair-pins in the attempt, laughed, and sat down beside Yuba Bill, with her hands crossed lightly on her lap.

The Judge recovered himself first and essayed an extravagant compliment.

"I'll trouble you for that hair-pin," said Miggles gravely. Half a dozen hands were eagerly stretched forward; the missing hair-pin was restored to its fair owner; and Miggles, crossing the room, looked keenly in the face of the invalid. The solemn eyes looked back at hers with an expression we had never seen before. Life and intelligence seemed to struggle back into the rugged face. Miggles laughed again, and turned her black eyes and white teeth once more towards us.

"This afflicted person is—" hesitated the Judge.

"J'm!" said Miggles.

"Your father?"

"No!"

"Brother?"

"No!"

"Husband?"

"Yes! But come," she said briskly, "you must be hungry. Who'll bear a hand to help me get tea?"

She had no lack of volunteers. In a few moments Yuba Bill was engaged like Caliban in bearing logs for this Miranda; the expressman was grinding coffee on the veranda; to myself the arduous duty of slicing meat was assigned; and the Judge lent each man his good-humoured and voluble counsel. And when Miggles, assisted by the Judge, set the table with all the available crockery, we had become quite joyous, in spite of the rain that beat

against windows, the wind that whirled down the chimney, the two ladies who whispered together in the corner, or the magpie, who uttered a satirical commentary on their conversation from his perch above. In the now bright, blazing fire we could see that the walls were papered with illustrated journals, arranged with feminine taste and discrimination. The furniture was extemporised and adapted from candle-boxes and packing-cases, and covered with gay calico or the skin of some animal. The arm-chair of the helpless Jim was an ingenious variation of a flour-barrel. There was neatness, and even a taste for the picturesque, to be seen in the few details of the long low room.

The meal was a culinary success. But more, it was a social triumph,—chiefly, I think, owing to the rare tact of Miggles in guiding the conversation, asking all the questions herself, yet bearing throughout a frankness that rejected the idea of any concealment on her own part, so that we talked of ourselves, of our prospects, of the journey, of the weather, of each other,—of everything but our host and hostess. It must be confessed that Miggles's conversation was never elegant, rarely grammatical, and that at times she employed words the use of which had generally been yielded to our sex. But they were delivered with such a lighting up of teeth and eyes, and were usually followed by a laugh—a laugh peculiar to Miggles—so frank and honest that it seemed to clear the moral atmosphere.

Once during the meal we heard a noise like the rubbing of a heavy body against the outer walls of the house. This was shortly followed by a scratching at

the door. "That's Joaquin," said Miggles, in reply to our questioning glances; "would you like to see him?" before we could answer she had opened the door, and disclosed a half-grown grizzly, who instantly raised himself on his haunches, with his fore-paws hanging down in the popular attitude of mendicancy, and looked admiringly at Miggles, with a very singular resemblance in his manner to Yuba Bill. "That's my watch-dog," said Miggles, in explanation. "Oh, he don't bite," she added, as the two lady passengers fluttered into a corner. "Does he, old Toppy?" (the latter remark being addressed directly to the sagacious Joaquin).

"I tell you what, boys," continued Miggles, after she had fed and closed the door on *Ursa Minor*, "you were in big luck that Joaquin wasn't hanging round when you dropped in tonight." "Where was he?" asked the Judge. "With me," said Miggles. "Lord love you! he trots round with me as if he was a man."

We were silent for a few moments, and listened to the wind. Perhaps we all had the same picture before us,—of Miggles walking through the rainy woods with her savage guardian at her side. The Judge, I remember, said something about Una and her lion, but Miggles received it, as she did other compliments, with quiet gravity.

The incident of the bear did not add anything in Miggles's favour to the opinions of those of her own sex who were present. In fact, the repast over, a chillness radiated from the two lady passengers. Miggles felt it and suddenly declaring that it was time to "turn in," offered to show the ladies to their bed in an adjoining

room. "You, boys, will have to camp out here by the fire as well as you can," she added "as thar ain't but the one room."

Our sex—by which, my dear sir, I allude of course to the stronger portion of humanity—has been generally relieved from the imputation of curiosity or a fondness for gossip. Yet I am constrained to say, that hardly had the door closed on Miggles than we crowded together, whispering, smiling, and exchanging suspicions, and a thousand speculations in regard to our pretty hostess and her singular companion. In the midst of an exciting discussion the door opened again and Miggles re-entered.

But not, apparently, the same Miggles who a few hours before had flashed upon us. Her eyes were downcast, and as she hesitated for a moment on the threshold, with a blanket on her arm, she seemed to have left behind her the frank fearlessness which had charmed us a moment before. Coming into the room, she drew a low stool beside the paralytic's chair, sat down, drew the blanket over her shoulders, and saying, "If it's all the same to you, boys, as we're rather crowded, I'll stop here tonight," took the invalid's withered hand in her own, and turned her eyes upon the dying fire. The rain still beat upon the roof, wandering gusts of wind stirred the embers into momentary brightness, until, in a lull of the elements, Miggles suddenly lifted up her head, and, throwing her hair over her shoulder, turned her face upon the group and asked—

"Is there any of you that knows me?"

There was no reply.

"Think again! I lived at Marysville in '53. Everybody knew me there. I kept the Polka Saloon until I came to live with Jim. That's six years ago. Perhaps I've changed some."

The absence of recognition might have upset her. She turned her head to the fire again, and it was some seconds before she again spoke, and then more rapidly—

"Well, you see I thought some of you must have known me. There's no great harm done anyway. What I was going to say was this: Jim here"—she took his hand in both of hers as she spoke—"used to know me, if you didn't. He married me and spent a heap of money upon me. And one day—it's six years ago this winter—Jim came home, sat down on the sofy, like as you see him in that chair, and never moved again without help. He was struck all of a heap, and never seemed to know what ailed him. The doctors came and said as how it was caused all along of his way of life,—for Jim was mighty free and wild like,—and that he would never get better, and couldn't last long anyway. They advised me to send him to Frisco to the hospital, for he was no good to any one and would be a baby all his life. Perhaps it was something in Jim's eye, perhaps it was that I never had a baby, but I said 'No.'

sold out my business and bought this yer place, because it was sort of out of the way of travel, you see, and I brought my baby here."

After a pause she went on:

"It was a long time before I could get the hang of things about yer. I couldn't get any woman to help me, and a man I dursn't trust, but what with the Indians hereabout, who'd do odd jobs for me, and having everything sent from

the North Fork, Jim and I managed to worry through. The Doctor would run up from Sacramento once in a while. He'd ask to see 'Miggles's baby,' as he called Jim, and when he'd go away, he'd say, 'Miggles, you're a trump,—God bless you ;' and it didn't seem so lonely after that. But the last time he was here he said, as he opened the door to go, 'Do you know, Miggles, your baby will grow up to be a man yet and an honour to you, but not here, Miggles, not here !' And I thought he went away sad.

"The folks about here are very kind," said Miggles. "The men from the Fork used to hang around here, until they found they wasn't wanted, and the women are kind, and don't call. I was pretty lonely until I picked up Joaquin in the woods yonder one day, when he wasn't so high, and taught him to beg for his dinner, and then thar's Polly—that's the magpie—she knows no end of tricks, and makes it quite sociable of evenings with her talk, and so I don't feel like as I was the only living being about the ranch. And Jim here," said Miggles, with her old laugh again, "Jim—why, boys, you would admire to see how much he knows for a man like him. Sometimes I bring him flowers, and he looks at 'em just as natural as if he knew 'em, and times, when we're sitting alone, I read him those things on the wall. Why, Lord. !" said Miggles, with her frank laugh, "I've read him that whole side of the house this winter. There never was such a man for reading as Jim.

"And now it's getting late," said Miggles, gravely, "and you'd better all turn in. Goodnight, boys," and throwing the blanket over her head, Miggles laid herself down beside Jim's chair, her head pillowed on the low stool that held his feet, and spoke no more. The fire slowly

faded from the hearth, we each sought our blankets in silence, and presently there was no sound in the long room but the pattering of the rain upon the roof and the heavy breathing of the sleepers.

It was nearly morning when I awoke from a troubled dream. The storm had passed, the stars were shining, and through the shutterless window the full moon, lifting itself over the solemn pines without, looked into the room. It touched the lonely figure in the chair with an infinite compassion, and seemed to baptize with a shining flood the lowly head of the woman whose hair, as in the sweet old story, bathed the feet of him she loved. And then I fell asleep and only woke at broad day, with Yuba Bill standing over me, and "All aboard" ringing in my ears.

Coffee was waiting for us on the table, but Miggles was gone. We wandered about the house and lingered long after the horses were harnessed, but she did not return. It was evident that she wished to avoid a formal leave-taking, and had so left us to depart as we had come. After we had helped the ladies into the coach, we returned to the house and solemnly shook hands with the paralytic Jim. Then we looked for the last time around the long low room, at the stool where Miggles had sat, and slowly took our seats in the waiting coach. The whip cracked, and we were off!

But as we reached the highroad, Bill's dexterous hand laid the six horses back on their haunches, and the stage stopped with a jerk. For there, on a little eminence beside the road, stood Miggles, her hair flying, her eyes sparkling, her white handkerchief waving, and her white teeth flashing a last "good-bye." We waved our hats in return. And

then Yuba Bill, as if fearful of further fascination, madly lashed his horses forward, and we sank back in our seats. We exchanged not a word until we reached the North Fork and the stage drew up at the Independence House. Then, the Judge leading, we walked into the bar-room and took our places gravely at the bar.

"Are your glasses charged, gentlemen?" said the Judge, solemnly taking off his white hat.

"Well, then here's to *Miggles*—GOD BLESS HER!"

THE BOTTLE IMP

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

There was a man of the island of Hawaii, whom I shall call Keawe ; for the truth is, he still lives, and his name must be kept secret. This man was poor, brave, and active ; he could read and write like a schoolmaster ; he was a first-rate mariner besides, sailed for some time in the island steamers, and steered a whale-boat on the Hamakua coast. At length it came in Keawe's mind to have a sight of the great world and foreign cities, and he shipped on a vessel bound to San Francisco.

This is a fine town, with a fine harbour, and rich people uncountable ; and, in particular, there is one hill which is covered with palaces. Upon this hill Keawe was one day taking a walk, with his pocket full of money, viewing the great houses upon either hand with pleasure.

"What fine houses these are !" he was thinking, "and how happy must these people be who dwell in them, and take no care for the morrow !" The thought was in his mind when he came abreast of a house that was smaller than some others, but all finished and beautified like a toy ; the steps of that house shone like silver, and the borders of the garden bloomed like garlands, and the windows were bright like diamonds ; and Keawe stopped and wondered at the excellence of all he saw. So stopping, he was aware of a man that looked forth upon him through a window. The man was elderly, with a bald head and a black beard ; and his face was heavy with sorrow, and he bitterly sighed. And the truth of it is, that as Keawe looked in upon the

man, and the man looked out upon Keawe, each envied the other.

All of a sudden the man smiled and nodded, and beckoned Keawe to enter, and met him at the door of the house.

"This is a fine house of mine," said the man, and bitterly sighed. "Would you not care to view the chambers?"

So he led Keawe all over it, from the cellar to the roof, and there was nothing there that was not perfect of its kind, and Keawe was astonished.

"Truly," said Keawe, "this is a beautiful house; if I lived in the like of it, I should be laughing all day long. How comes it, then, that you should be sighing?"

"There is no reason," said the man, "why you should not have a house in all points similar to this, and finer, if you wish. You have some money, I suppose?"

"I have fifty dollars," said Keawe; "but a house like this will cost more than fifty dollars."

The man made a computation. "I am sorry you have no more," said he, "for it may raise you trouble in the future; but it shall be yours at fifty dollars."

"The house?" asked Keawe.

"No, not the house," replied the man; "but the bottle. For, I must tell you, although I appear to you so rich and fortunate, all my fortune, and this house itself and its garden, came out of a bottle not much bigger than a point. This is it."

And he opened a lock-fast place, and took out a round-bellied bottle with a long neck; the glass of it was white like milk. Withinsides something obscurely moved, like a shadow and a fire.

"This is the bottle," said the man ; and, when Keawe laughed, "You do not believe me ?" he added. "Try, then, for yourself. See if you can break it."

So Keawe took the bottle up and dashed it on the floor till he was weary ; but it jumped on the floor like a child's ball, and was not injured.

"This is a strange thing," said Keawe. "For by the touch of it, as well as by the look, the bottle should be of glass."

"Of glass it is," replied the man, sighing more heavily than ever ; "but the glass of it was tempered in the flames of hell. An imp lives in it, and that is the shadow we behold there moving ; or, so I suppose. If any man buy this bottle the imp is at his command ; all that he desires—love, fame, money, houses like this house, ay, or a city like this city—all are his at the word uttered. But once it is sold, the power goes and the protection."

"And yet you talk of selling it yourself?" Keawe said.

"I have all I wish, and I am growing elderly," replied the man. "There is one thing the imp cannot do—he cannot prolong life ; and, it would not be fair to conceal from you, there is a drawback to the bottle ; for if a man die before he sells it, he must burn in hell for ever."

"To be sure, that is a drawback and no mistake," cried Keawe. "I would not meddle with the thing."

"Dear me, you must not run away with things," returned the man. "All you have to do is to use the power of the imp in moderation, and then sell it to some one else, as I do to you, and finish your life in comfort."

"Well, I observe two things," said Keawe. "All the time you keep sighing like a maid in love, that is one ; and, for the other, you sell this bottle very cheap."

"I have told you already why I sigh," said the man. "It is because I fear my health is breaking up ; and to die and go to the devil is a pity for any one. As for why I sell so cheap, I must explain to you there is a peculiarity about the bottle. Long ago, when the devil brought it first upon earth, it was extremely expensive, and was sold first of all for many millions of dollars ; but it cannot be sold at all, unless sold at a loss. If you sell it for as much as you paid for it, back it comes to you again like a homing pigeon. It follows that the price has kept falling in these centuries, and the bottle is now remarkably cheap. I bought it myself from one of my great neighbours on this hill, and the price I paid was only ninety dollars. I could sell it for as high as eighty-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents, but not a penny dearer, or back the thing must come to me. Also remember it must be coined money that you sell it for."

"How am I to know that this is all true ?" asked Keawe.

"Some of it you can try at once," replied the man. "Give me your fifty dollars, take the bottle, and wish your fifty dollars back into your pocket. If that does not happen, I pledge you my honour I will cry off the bargain and restore your money."

"You are not deceiving me ?" said Keawe.

The man bound himself with a great oath.

"Well, I will risk that much," said Keawe, "for that can do no harm." And he paid over his money to the man, and the man handed him the bottle.

"Imp of the bottle," said Keawe, "I want my fifty dollars back." And sure enough, he had scarce said the word before his pocket was as heavy as ever.

"To be sure this is a wonderful bottle," said Keawe.

"And now good-morning to you, my fine fellow, and the devil go with you for me," said the man.

"Hold on," said Keawe, "I don't want any more of this fun. Here, take your bottle back."

"You have bought it for less than I paid for it," replied the man, rubbing his hands. "It is yours now; and, for my part, I am only concerned to see the back of you."

Now, when Keawe was in the street, with the bottle under his arm, he began to think. "If all is true about this bottle, I may have made a losing bargain," thought he. "But, perhaps the man was only fooling me." The first thing he did was to count his money; the sum was exact—forty-nine dollars American money, and one Chili piece. "That looks like the truth," said Keawe. "Now I will try another part."

The streets in that part of the city were as clean as a ship's decks, and though it was noon, there were no passengers. Keawe set the bottle in the gutter and walked away. Twice he looked back, and there was the milky round-bellied bottle where he left it. A third time he looked back, and turned a corner; but he had scarce done so, when something knocked upon his elbow, and behold! it was the long neck sticking up; and as for the round belly, it was jammed into the pocket of his pilot-coat.

"And th at looks like the truth," said Keawe.

He went back on board his ship. Now Keawe had a mate on board whose name was Lopaka.

"What ails you that you stare like this?" Said Lopaka.

They were alone in the ship's fore-castle, and Keawe bound him to secrecy and told all.

"This is a very strange affair," said Lopaka; "and I fear you will be in trouble about this bottle. But there is one point very clear—that you are sure of the trouble, and you had better have the profit in the bargain. Make up your mind what you want with it; give the order, and if it is done as you desire, I will buy the bottle myself; for I have an idea of my own to get a schooner, and go trading through the islands."

"That is not my idea," said Keawe; "but to have a beautiful house and garden on the Kona Coast where I was born, the sun shining in at the door, flowers in the garden, glass in the windows, pictures on the walls, and toys and fine carpets on the tables, and to live there without care and make merry with my friends and relatives."

"Well," said Lopaka, "let us carry it back with us to Hawaii; and if all comes true, as you suppose, I will buy the bottle, as I said, and ask a schooner."

Upon that they were agreed, and it was not long before the ship returned to Honolulu, carrying Keawe and Lopaka, and the bottle. They were scarce come ashore when they met a friend upon the beach, who began at once to condole with Keawe.

"I do not know what I am to be condoled about," said Keawe.

"Is it possible you have not heard," said the friend, "your uncle—that good old man—is dead, and your cousin—that beautiful boy—was drowned at sea?"

Keawe was filled with sorrow and beginning to weep and to lament, he forgot about the bottle. But Lopaka was thinking to himself, and presently, when Keawe's grief was a little abated, "I have been thinking," said Lopaka. "Had not your uncle lands in Hawaii, in the district of Kau?"

"No," said Keawe, "not in Kau; they are on the mountain side—a little way south of Hookena."

"These lands will now be yours?" asked Lopaka.

"And so they will," says Keawe, and began again to lament for his relatives.

"No," said Lopaka, "do not lament at present. I have a thought in my mind. How if this should be the doing of the bottle? For here is the place ready for your house."

"If this be so," cried Keawe, "it is a very ill way to serve me by killing my relatives. But it may be, indeed; for it was in just such a station that I saw the house with my mind's eye."

"The house, however, is not yet built," said Lopaka.

"No, nor like to be!" said Keawe; "for though my uncle has some coffee and bananas, it will not be more than will keep me in comfort; and the rest of that land is the black lava."

"Let us go to the lawyer," said Lopaka; "I have still this idea in my mind."

Now, when they came to the lawyer's, it appeared Keawe's uncle had grown monstrous rich in the last days and there was a fund of money.

"And here is the money for the house!" cried Lopaka.

"If you are thinking of a new house," said the lawyer, "here is the card of a new architect of whom they tell me great things."

"Better and better!" cried Lopaka. "Here is all made plain for us. Let us continue to obey orders."

So they went to the architect, and he had drawings of houses on his table.

"You want something out of the way," said the architect. "How do you like this?" and he handed a drawing to Keawe.

Now, when Keawe set eyes on the drawing, he cried out aloud, for it was the picture of his thought exactly drawn.

"I am in for this house," thought he. "Little as I like the way it comes to me, I am in for it now, and I may as well take the good along with the evil."

So he told the architect all that he wished, and how he would have that house furnished, and about the pictures on the wall and the knick-knacks on the tables; and he asked the man plainly for how much he would undertake the whole affair.

The architect put many questions, and took his pen and made a computation; and when he had done he named the very sum that Keawe had inherited.

Lopaka and Keawe looked at one another and nodded.

"It is quite clear," thought Keawe, "that I am to have this house, whether or no. It comes from the devil, and I fear I will get little good by that; and of one thing I am sure, I will make no more wishes as long as I have

this bottle. But with the house I am saddled, and I may as well take the good along with the evil."

So he made his terms with the architect, and they signed a paper; and Keawe and Lopaka took ship again and sailed to Australia; for it was concluded between them they should not interfere at all, but leave the architect and the bottle imp to build and to adorn that house at their own pleasure.

The voyage was a good voyage, only all the time Keawe was holding in his breath, for he had sworn he would utter no more wishes, and take no more favours from the devil. The time was up when they got back. The architect told them that the house was ready, and Keawe and Lopaka went to view the house, and see if all had been done fitly according to the thought that was in Keawe's mind.

When they had viewed all, Keawe and Lopaka sat on the porch.

"Well," asked Lopaka, "is it all as you designed?"

"Words cannot utter it," said Keawe. "It is better than I dreamed, and I am sick with satisfaction."

"There is but one thing to consider," said Lopaka, "all this may be quite natural, and the bottle imp have nothing whatever to say to it. If I were to buy the bottle, and got no schooner after all, I should have put my hand in the fire for nothing. I gave you my word, I know; but yet I think you would not grudge me one more proof."

"I have sworn I would take no more favours," said Keawe. "I have gone already deep enough."

"This is no favour I am thinking of," replied Lopaka. "It is only to see the imp himself. There is nothing to be gained by that, and so nothing to be ashamed of, and yet, if I once saw him, I should be sure of the whole matter. So indulge me so far, and let me see the imp; and, after that, here is the money in my hand, and I will buy it."

"There is only one thing I am afraid of," said Keawe. "The imp may be very ugly to view, and if you once set eyes upon him you might be very undesirous of the bottle."

"I am a man of my word," said Lopaka. "And here is the money betwixt us."

"Very well," replied Keawe, "I have a curiosity myself. So come, let us have one look at you, Mr. Imp."

Now as soon as that was said, the imp looked out of the bottle, and in again, swift as a lizard; and there sat Keawe and Lopaka turned to stone. The night had quite come, before either found a thought to say or voice to say it with; and then Lopaka pushed the money over and took the bottle.

"I am a man of my word," said he, "and had need to be so, or I would not touch this bottle with my foot. Well, I shall get my schooner and a dollar or two for my pocket; and then I will be rid of this devil as fast as I can. For to tell you the plain truth, the look of him has cast me down."

So Lopaka went down the mountain; and Keawe stood in his front balcony, and all the time he trembled and clasped his hands, and prayed for his friend, and gave glory to God that he himself was escaped out of that trouble.

But the next day came very brightly, and that new house of his was so delightful to behold that he forgot his terrors. One day followed another and Keawe dwelt there in perpetual joy.

So time went by, until one day Keawe went upon a visit as far as Kailua to certain of his friends. There he was well feasted; and left as soon as he could the next morning, and rode hard, for he was impatient to behold his beautiful house. A little beyond Honaunau, looking far ahead, he was aware of a woman standing on the edge of the sea; and she seemed a well-grown girl, but he thought no more of it. But when he came abreast of her he drew rein.

"I thought I knew everyone in this country," said he. "How comes it that I do not know you?"

"I am Kokua, daughter of Kiano," said the girl. "Who are you?"

"I will tell you who I am in a little," said Keawe, dismounting from his horse, "but not now. Tell me, first of all, one thing: are you married?"

At this Kokua laughed out aloud. "It is you who ask questions," she said. "Are you married yourself?"

"Indeed, Kokua, I am not," replied Keawe, "and never thought to be until this hour. But if you want none of me, say so, and I will go on to my own place; if, however, you think me no worse than any other young man, say so, too, and I will turn aside to your father's for the night, and to-morrow I will talk with the good man."

Kokua said never a word but she looked at the sea and laughed.

“Kokua,” said Keawe, “if you say nothing, I will take that for the good answer; so let us be stepping to your father’s door.”

Now, when they had come to the door, Kiano came out on his verandah, and cried out and welcomed Keawe by name. At that the girl looked over, for the fame of the great house had come to her ears; and, to be sure, it was a great temptation. All that evening they were very merry together; and the girl was as bold as brass under the eyes of her parents, and made a mock of Keawe, for she had a quick wit. The next day he had a word with Kiano, and found the girl alone.

“Kokua,” said he, “you made a mock of me all the evening; and it is still time to bid me go. I would not tell you who I was, because I have so fine a house, and I feared you would think too much of that house and too little of the man who loves you. Now you know all, and if you wish to have seen the last of me, say so at once.”

“No,” said Kokua, but this time she did not laugh, nor did Keawe ask for more.

This was the wooing of Keawe. Keawe left Kokua; his horse flew up the path of the mountain, and the sound of the hoofs, and the sound of Keawe singing to himself for pleasure, echoed in the caverns of the dead. He came to the Bright House, and still he was singing.

“Here am I now upon my high place,” he said to himself. “Life may be no better. For the first time I will light up the chambers, and bathe in my fine bath with the hot water and the cold, and sleep above in the bed of my bridal chamber.”

So the Chinaman had word, and he must rise from sleep and light the furnaces. When the water began to be hot the Chinaman cried to his master ; and Keawe went into the bathroom ; and the Chinaman heard him sing as he filled the marble basin ; and heard him sing, and the singing broken, as he undressed ; until of a sudden, the song ceased.

Now, the truth of it was this : as Keawe undressed for his bath, he spied upon his flesh a patch like a patch of lichen on a rock, and it was then that he stopped singing. For he knew the likeness of that patch, and knew that he was fallen in the Chinese Evil.

Awhile he sat upon the edge of the bath, then sprang, with a cry and ran outside ; and to and fro, to and fro, along the balcony, like one despairing.

Now you are to observe what sort of a man Keawe was, for he might have dwelt there in the Bright House for years, and no one been the wiser of his sickness ; but he reckoned nothing of that, if he must lose Kokua. And again he might have wed Kokua even as he was ; and so many would have done, because they have the souls of pigs ; but Keawe loved the maid manfully, and he would do her no hurt and bring her in no danger.

A little beyond the midst of the night, there came in his mind the recollection of that bottle. He went round to the back porch, and called to memory the day when the devil had looked forth ; and at the thought ice ran in his veins.

"A dreadful thing is the bottle," thought Keawe, "and dreadful is the imp, and it is a dreadful thing to risk the flames of hell. But what other hope have I to cure my sickness or to wed Kokua ?"

Thereupon he called to mind it was the next day the *Hall* went by on her return to Honolulu. "There must I go first," he thought, "and see Lopaka. For the best hope that I have now is to find that same bottle I was so pleased to be rid of."

Never a wink could he sleep; the food stuck in his throat; but he sent a letter to Kiano, and about the time when the steamer would be coming, rode down beside the cliff of the tombs. So he came down to Hookena, and there was all the country gathered for the steamer as usual. In the shed before the store they sat and jested and passed the news; but there was no matter of speech in Keawe's bosom.

Then the *Hall* came, and the whale-boat carried him on board.

Soon after darkness fell and the cabins were lit up, and the Haoles sat and played at the cards; but Keawe walked the deck all night; and all the next day he was still pacing to and fro like a wild animal in a menagerie.

Towards evening they passed Diamond Head, and came to the pier of Honolulu. Keawe stepped out among the crowd and began to ask for Lopaka. It seemed he had become the owner of a schooner—none better in the islands—and was gone upon an adventure as far as Pola-Pola or Kihiki; so there was no help to be looked for from Lopaka. Keawe called to mind a friend of his, a lawyer in the town (I must not tell his name), and inquired of him. They said he was grown suddenly rich, and had a fine new house upon Waikiki shore; and this put a thought in Keawe's head, and he called a hack and drove to the lawyer's house.

The house was all brand new, and the trees in the garden no greater than walking-sticks, and the lawyer, when he came, had the air of a man well pleased.

"What can I do to serve you?" said the lawyer.

"You are a friend of Lopaka's," replied Keawe, "and Lopaka purchased from me a certain piece of goods that I thought you might enable me to trace."

The lawyer's face became very dark. "I do not profess to misunderstand you, Mr. Keawe," said he, "though this is an ugly business to be stirring in. You may be sure I know nothing, but yet I have a guess, and if you would apply in a certain quarter I think you might have news."

And he named the name of a man, which, again, I had better not repeat. So it was for days, and Keawe went from one to another, finding everywhere new clothes and carriages, and fine new houses and men everywhere in great contentment, although, to be sure, when he hinted at his business their faces would cloud over.

"No doubt I am upon the track," thought Keawe. "These new clothes and carriages are all the gifts of the little imp, and these glad faces are the faces of men who have taken their profit and got rid of the accursed thing in safety. When I see pale cheeks and hear sighing, I shall know that I am near the bottle."

So it befell at last he was recommended to a Haole in Beritania street. When he came to the door, about the hour of the evening meal, there were the usual marks of the new house, and the young garden, and the electric light shining in the windows; but when the owner came, a shock of hope and fear ran through Keawe; for here

was a young man, white as a corpse, and black about the eyes, the hair shedding from his head, and such a look in his countenance as a man may have when he is waiting for the gallows.

“Here it is, to be sure,” thought Keawe, and so with this man he noways veiled his errand. “I am come to buy the bottle,” said he.

At the word, the young Haole of Beritania Street reeled against the wall.

“The bottle!” he gasped. “To buy the bottle!” Then he seemed to choke, and seizing Keawe by the arm, carried him into a room and poured out wine in two glasses.

“Here is my respects,” said Keawe. “Yes,” he added, “I am come to buy the bottle. What is the price by now?”

At that word the young man let his glass slip through his fingers, and looked upon Keawe like a ghost.

“The price,” says he; “the price! You do not know the price?”

“It is for that I am asking you,” returned Keawe. “But why are you so much concerned? Is there anything wrong about the price?”

“It has dropped a great deal in value since your time, Mr. Keawe,” said the young man, stammering.

“Well, well, I shall have the less to pay for it,” said Keawe. “How much did it cost you?”

The young man was as white as a sheet. “Two cents,” said he.

“What?” cried Keawe, “two cents? Why, then, you can only sell it for one. And he who buys it——”

The words died upon Keawe's tongue ; he who bought it could never sell it again, the bottle and the bottle imp must abide with him until he died, and when he died must carry him to the red end of hell.

The young man of Beritania Street fell upon his knees. "For God's sake, buy it!" he cried. "You can have all my fortune in the bargain. I was mad when I bought it at that price. I had embezzled money at my store ; I was lost else ; I must have gone to jail."

Poor creature," said Keawe, "you would risk your soul upon so desperate an adventure, and to avoid the proper punishment of your own disgrace ; and you think I could hesitate with love in front of me. Give me the bottle, and the change which I make sure you have all ready. Here is a five-cent piece."

It was as Keawe supposed ; the young man had the change ready in a drawer ; the bottle changed hands, and Keawe's fingers were no sooner clasped upon the stalk than he had breathed his wish to be a clean man. And, sure enough, when he got home to his room, and stripped himself before a glass, his flesh was whole like an infant's. And here was the strange thing : he had no sooner seen this miracle than his mind was changed within him, and he cared naught for the Chinese Evil, and little enough for Kokua ; and had but the one thought, that here he was bound to the bottle imp for time and for eternity, and had no better hope but to be a cinder for ever in the flames of hell.

"But it is done now," he thought, "and once more let me take the good along with the evil."

So it befell that he returned to Hawaii by the first steamer, and as soon as it could be managed he was wedded to Kokua, and carried her up the mountain side to the Bright House.

Now it was so with these two, that when they were together Keawe's heart was stilled ; but so soon as he was alone he fell into a brooding horror, and heard the flames crackle, and saw the red fire burn in the bottomless pit. The girl, indeed, had come to him wholly ; her heart leaped in her side at sight of him, her hand clung to his. She was pleasant in her nature. She had the good word always. Full of song she was, and went to and fro in the Bright House, the brightest thing in its three stories, carolling like the birds. And Keawe beheld and heard her with delight, and then must shrink upon one side, and weep and groan to think upon the price that he had paid for her ; and then he must dry his eyes, and wash his face, and go and sit with her on the broad balconies joining in her songs, and, with a sick spirit, answering her smiles.

There came a day when her feet began to be heavy and her songs more rare ; and now it was not Keawe only that would weep apart, but each would sunder from the other and sit in opposite balconies with the whole width of the Bright House betwixt. One day, coming softly through the house, he heard the sound of a child sobbing, and there was Kokua rolling her face upon the balcony floor, and weeping like the lost.

" You do well to weep in this house, Kokua," he said. " And yet I would give the head off my body that you (at least) might have been happy."

“Happy!” she cried. “Keawe, when you lived alone in your Bright House you were the word of the island for a happy man; laughter and song were in your mouth, and your face was as bright as the sunrise. Then you wedded poor Kokua; and the good God knows what is amiss in her—but from that day you have not smiled. Oh!” she cried, “what ails me? I thought I was pretty, and I knew I loved him. What ails me, that I throw this cloud upon my husband?”

“Poor Kokua,” said Keawe. He sat down by her side. “Poor Kokua,” he said again. “My poor child—my pretty. And I had thought all this while to spare you! Well, you shall know all. Then, at least, you will pity poor Keawe; then you will understand how much he loved you in the past—that he dared hell for your possession—and how much he loves you still (the poor condemned one), that he can yet call up a smile when he beholds you.”

“You have done this for me?” she cried. “Ah, well, then what do I care?” and she wept upon him.

“Ah, child!” said Keawe, “and yet, when I consider of the fire of hell, I care a good deal!”

“Never tell me,” said she, “no man can be lost because he loved Kokua, and no other fault. I tell you, Keawe, I shall save you with these hands or perish in your company. What! you loved me and gave your soul, and you think I will not die to save you in return?”

“Ah, my dear, you might die a hundred times, and what difference would that make?” he cried, “except to leave me lonely till the time comes for my damnation?”

"You know nothing," said she. "I was educated in a school in Honolulu; I am no common girl. And I tell you I shall save my lover. What is this you say about a cent? But all the world is not American. In England they have a piece they call a farthing, which is about half a cent. Ah! sorrow!" she cried, "that makes it scarcely better, for the buyer must be lost, and we shall find none so brave as my Keawe! But, then, there is France; they have a small coin there which they call a centime, and these go five to the cent, or thereabout. We could not do better. Come, Keawe, let us go to the French islands; let us go to Tahiti, as fast as ships can bear us. There we have four centimes, three centimes, two centimes, one centime; four possible sales to come and go on; and two of us to push the bargain. Come, my Keawe! and banish care. Kokua will defend you."

"Gift of God!" he cried. I cannot think that God will punish me for desiring aught so good. Be it as you will, then, take me where you please; I put my life and my salvation in your hands."

It was given out in the country they were gone pleasuring to the States, which was thought a strange thing, and yet not so strange as the truth, if any could have guessed it. After a pleasant voyage they came to Papeete, a French island.

It was judged the most wise to hire a house, which they did accordingly, opposite the British Consul's, to make a great parade of money, and themselves conspicuous with carriages and horses. This it was very easy to do, so long as they had the bottle in their possession; for Kokua was more bold than Keawe, and whenever

she had a mind, called on the imp for twenty or a hundred dollars. At this rate they soon grew to be remarked in the town.

Now they began to push the bottle. You are to consider it was not an easy subject to introduce; it was not easy to persuade people you are in earnest, when you offer to sell them for four centimes the spring of health and riches inexhaustible. It was necessary besides to explain the dangers of the bottle; and either people disbelieved the whole thing and laughed, or they thought the more of the darker part, and drew away from Keawe and Kokua, as from persons who had dealings with the devil. So far from gaining ground, these two began to find they were avoided in the town.

Depression fell upon their spirits. They would sit at night in their new house, after a day's weariness, and not exchange one word, or the silence would be broken by Kokua bursting suddenly into sobs. Sometimes they would pray together; sometimes they would have the bottle out upon the floor, and sit all evening watching how the shadow hovered in the midst. At such times they would be afraid even to go to rest.

"Heaven," Kokua thought one night, "how careless have I been—how weak! It is he, not I, that stands in this eternal peril; it was he, not I, that took the curse upon his soul. It is for my sake, and for the love of a creature of so little worth and such poor help that he now beholds so close to him the flames of hell. Am I so dull of spirit that never till now I have surmised my duty, or have I seen it before and turned aside? But now, at least, I take up my soul in both the hands of my

affection ; now I say farewell to the white steps of heaven and the waiting faces of my friends. A love for a love, and let mine be equalled with Keawe's ! A soul for a soul, and be it mine to perish !”

Once when Keawe lay moaning under the bananas she took in her hands the change—the precious centimes they kept ever at their side—and went out. The town slept, and she knew not whither to turn till she heard one coughing in the shadow of the trees.

“ Old man,” said Kokua, “ what do you here abroad in the cold night ?”

The old man could scarce express himself for coughing, but she made out that he was old and poor, and a stranger in the island.

“ Will you do me a service ?” said Kokua. “ As one stranger to another, and as an old man to a young woman, will you help a daughter of Hawaii ?”

“ Ah,” said the old man. “ So you are the witch from the Eight Islands, and even my old soul you seek to entangle.”

“ Sit down here,” said Kokua, “ and let me tell you a tale.” And she told him the story of Keawe from the beginning to the end.

“ And now,” said she, “ I am his wife, whom he bought with his soul's welfare. And what should I do ? If I went to him myself and offered to buy it, he would refuse. But if you go, he will sell it eagerly ; I will await you here ; you will buy it for four centimes, and I will buy it again for three. And the Lord strengthen a poor girl !”

“ If you meant falsely,” said the old man, “ I think God would strike you dead.”

"He would!" cried Kokua. "Be sure He would. I could not be so treacherous—God would not suffer it."

"Give me the four centimes and await me here," said the old man.

Now, when Kokua stood alone in the street, her spirit died. She did not have strength to run away, and she trembled like an affrighted child.

Then she saw the old man returning and he had the bottle in his hand.

She bought the cursed bottle, concealed it under her holoku, said farewell to the old man, and walked off along the avenue, she cared not whither. For all roads were now the same to her, and led equally to hell.

Near day she came to her mind again, and returned to the house. Keawe slumbered like a child. Kokua stood and gazed upon his face.

She lay down in the bed and her misery was so extreme that she fell in a deep slumber instantly.

Late in the morning her husband woke her and gave her the good news. It seemed he was silly with delight, for he paid no heed to her distress.

All the while Keawe was eating and talking, and planning the time of their return, and thanking her for saving him, and calling her the true helper after all. He laughed at the old man that was fool enough to buy that bottle.

Then he went out, and Kokua was alone.

What chance had she to sell that bottle at two centimes? None, she perceived. And if she had any, here was her husband hurrying her away to a country where there was nothing lower than a cent.

By and by, Keawe came back, and would have her take a drive.

"My husband, I am ill," she said. "I am out of heart. Excuse me, I can take no pleasure."

Then was Keawe more wroth than ever.

"This is your truth," cried he, "and this your affection! Your husband is just saved from eternal ruin, which he encountered for the love of you—and you can take no pleasure! Kokua, you have a disloyal heart."

He went forth again furious, and wandered in the town all day. He met friends, and drank with them. All the time Keawe was ill at ease, because he was taking this pastime while his wife was sad, and because he knew in his heart that she was more right than he; and the knowledge made him drink the deeper.

Now there was an old brutal Haole drinking with him, one that had been a boatswain of a whaler—a runaway, a digger in gold mines, a convict in prisons. He had a low mind and foul mouth; he loved to drink and to see others drunken; and he pressed the glass upon Keawe. Soon there was no more money in the company.

"Here, you!" said the boatswain, "you are rich, you have been always saying. You have a bottle or some foolishness."

"Yes," said Keawe, "I am rich; I will go back and get some money from my wife, who keeps it."

"That's a bad idea, mate," said the boatswain. "Never you trust a petticoat with dollars. They're all as false as water; you keep an eye on her."

Now this word stuck in Keawe's mind; for he was muddled with what he had been drinking.

"I should not wonder but she was false, indeed," thought he. "Why else should she be so cast down at my release? But I will show her I am not the man to be fooled. I will catch her in the act."

Accordingly, when they were back in town, Keawe bade the boatswain wait for him at the corner, and went forward up the avenue alone to the door of his house. The night had come again; there was a light within, but never a sound; and Keawe crept about the corner, opened the back door softly, and looked in.

There was Kokua on the floor, the lamp at her side; before her was a milk-white bottle, with a round belly and a long neck; and as she viewed it, Kokua wrung her hands.

A long time Keawe stood and looked in the doorway. His knees were loosened, and the fumes of the wine departed from his head. And then he had another thought; and it was a strange one, that made his cheeks to burn.

"I must make sure of this," thought he.

So he closed the door, and went softly round the corner again, and then came noisily in, as though he were but now returned. And, lo! by the time he opened the front door no bottle was to be seen; and Kokua sat in a chair and started up like one awakened out of sleep.

"I have been drinking all day and making merry," said Keawe. "I have been with good companions, and now I only come back for money, and return to drink and carouse with them again."

Both his face and voice were as stern as judgment, but Kokua was too troubled to observe.

"You do well to use your own, my husband," said she.

"Oh, I do well in all things," said Keawe, and he went straight to the chest and took out money. But he looked besides in the corner where they kept the bottle, and there it was.

"It is what I feared," he thought. "It is she who has bought it."

And then he came to himself a little and rose up.

"Kokua," said he, "I said to you today what ill became me. Now I return to house with my jolly companions," and at that he laughed a little quietly. "I will take more pleasure in the cup if you forgive me."

She clasped his knees in a moment, she kissed his knees with flowing tears.

"Oh," she cried, "I ask but a kind word!"

"Let us never one think hardly of the other," said Keawe, and was gone out of the house.

Now, the money that Keawe had taken was only some of that store of centime pieces they had laid in at their arrival. It was very sure he had no mind to be drinking. His wife had given her soul for him, now he must give his for hers; no other thought was in the world with him.

At the corner, there was the boatswain waiting.

"My wife has the bottle," said Keawe, "and, unless you help me to recover it, there can be no more money and no more liquor tonight."

"You do not mean to say you are serious about that bottle?" cried the boatswain.

"There is the lamp," said Keawe. "Do I look as if I was jesting?"

"That is so," said the boatswain. "You look as serious as a ghost."

"Well, then," said Keawe, "here are two centimes; you must go to my wife in the house, and offer her these for the bottle. Bring it to me here, and I will buy it back from you for one; for that is the law with this bottle that it must still be sold for a less sum. But whatever you do, never breathe a word to her that you have come from me."

"Mate, I wonder are you making a fool of me?" asked the boatswain.

"It will do you no harm if I am," returned Keawe.

"That is so, mate," said the boatswain.

"And if you doubt me," added Keawe, "you can try. As soon as you are clear of the house, wish to have your pocket full of money, or a bottle of the best rum, or what you please, and you will see the virtue of the thing."

"Very well, Kanaka," says the boatswain. "I will try; but if you are having your fun out of me, I will take my fun out of you with a belaying-pin."

So the whaler-man went off up the avenue; and Keawe stood and waited.

It seemed a long time he had to wait before he heard a voice singing in the darkness of the avenue. He knew the voice to be the boatswain's; but it was strange how drunken it appeared upon a sudden.

Next, the man himself came stumbling into the light of the lamp. He had the devil's bottle buttoned to his coat; another bottle was in his hand; and even as he came in view he raised it to his mouth and drank.

"You have it," said Keawe. "I see that."

"Hands off!" cried the boatswain, jumping back. "Take a step near me, and I'll smash your mouth. You thought you could make a cat's-paw of me, did you?"

"What do you mean?" cried Keawe.

"Mean?" cried the boatswain. "This is a pretty good bottle, this is; that's what I mean. How I got it for two centimes I can't make out; but I am sure you sha'nt have it for one."

"You mean you won't sell it?" gasped Keawe.

"No, *sir*," cried the boatswain. "But I'll give you a drink of the rum, if you like."

"I tell you," said Keawe, "the man who has that bottle goes to hell."

"I reckon I'm going anyway" returned the sailor; "and this bottle's the best thing to go with I've struck yet. No, *sir*!" he cried again, "this is my bottle now, and you can go and fish for another."

"Can this be true?" Keawe cried. "For your own sake, I beseech you, sell it me!"

"I don't value any of your talk," replied the boatswain. "You thought I was a flat, now you see I'm not; and there's an end. If you won't have a swallow of the rum, I'll have one myself. Here's your health, and good-night to you!"

So off he went down the avenue towards town, and there goes the bottle out of the story.

But Keawe ran to Kokua light as the wind; and great was their joy that night; and great, since then, has been the peace of all their days in the Bright House.

CHRISTOPHERSON

GEORGE GISSING

It was twenty years ago, and on an evening in May. All day long there had been sunshine. Owing, doubtless, to the incident I am about to relate, the light and warmth of that long-vanished day live with me still.

Only at sunset did I leave the house. With no purpose but to rest and breathe, I wandered for half an hour, and found myself at length where Great Portland Street opens into Marylebone Road. Over the way, in the shadow of Trinity Church, was an old book shop, well known to me : the gas-jet shining upon the stall with its rows of volumes drew me across. I began turning over pages, and—invariable consequence—fingering what money I had in my pocket. A certain book overcame me ; I stepped into the little shop to pay for it.

While standing at the stall, I had been vaguely aware of some one beside me, a man who was also looking over the books ; as I came out again with my purchase, this stranger gazed at me intently, with a half-smile of peculiar interest. He seemed about to say something. I walked slowly away ; the man moved in the direction. Just in front of the church he made a quick movement to my side, and spoke.

“ Pray excuse me, sir—don't misunderstand me—I only wished to ask whether you have noticed the name written on the flyleaf of the book you have just bought ? ”

The respectful nervousness of his voice naturally made me suppose at first that the man was going to beg ; but he seemed no ordinary mendicant. I judged him to be about sixty years of age ; his long, thin hair and straggling beard were grizzled, and a somewhat rheumy eye looked out from his bloodless, hollowed countenance ; he was very shabbily clad, yet as a fallen gentleman, and indeed his accent made it clear to what class he originally belonged. The expression with which he regarded me had so much intelligence, so much good nature, and at the same time such a pathetic diffidence, that I could not but answer him in the friendliest way. I had not seen the name on the flyleaf, but at once I opened the book, and by the light of a gas-lamp read, inscribed in a very fine hand, " W. R. Christopherson, 1849."

" It is my name," said the stranger, in a subdued and uncertain voice.

" Indeed ? The book used to belong to you ?"

" It belonged to me." He laughed oddly, a tremulous little crow of a laugh. " You never heard of the sale of the Christopherson library ? To be sure, you were too young ; it was in 1860. I have often come across books with my name in them on the stall—often. I had happened to notice this just before you came up, and when I saw you look at it, I was curious to see whether you would buy it. Pray excuse the freedom I am taking. Lovers of books—don't you think—?"

The broken question was completed by his look, and when I said that I quite understood and agreed with him he crowed his little laugh.

" Have you a large library ?" he inquired.

"Oh dear, no. Only a few hundred volumes. Too many for one who has no house of his own."

He smiled good-naturedly, bent his head, and murmured just audibly:

"My catalogue numbered 24,718."

I was growing curious and interested. Venturing no more direct questions, I asked whether, at the time he spoke of, he lived in London.

"If you have five minutes to spare," was the timid reply, "I will show you my house. I mean"—again the little crowing laugh—"the house which was mine."

Willingly I walked on with him. He led me a short distance up the road striking Regent's Park, and paused at length before a house in an imposing terrace.

"There," he whispered, "I used to live. The window to the right of the door—that was my library. Ah!"

And he heaved a deep sigh.

"A misfortune befell you," I said, also in a subdued voice.

"The result of my own folly. I had enough for my needs, but thought I needed more. I let myself be drawn into business—I, who knew nothing of such things—and there came the black day—the black day."

We turned to retrace our steps, and walking slowly, with heads bent, came in silence again to the church.

"I wonder whether you have bought any other of my books?" asked Christopherson, with his gentle smile, when we had paused as if for leave-taking.

I replied that I did not remember to have come across his name before; then on an impulse, asked whether he would care to have the book I carried in my hand; if so,

with pleasure I would give it him. No sooner were the words spoken than I saw the delight they caused the hearer. He hesitated, murmured reluctance, but soon gratefully accepted my offer, and flushed with joy as he took the volume.

“ I still have a few books,” he said, under his breath, as if he spoke of something he was ashamed to make known. “ But it is very rarely indeed that I can add to them. I feel I have not thanked you half enough ”

We shook hands and parted.

My lodging at that time was in Camden Town. One afternoon, perhaps a fortnight later, I had walked for an hour or two, and on my way back I stopped at a book-stall in the High Street. Some one came up to my side ; I looked, and recognized Christopherson. Our greeting was like that of old friends.

“ I have seen you several times lately,” said the broken gentleman, who looked shabbier than before in the broad daylight, “ but I—didn’t like to speak. I live not far from here.”

“ Why, so do I,” and I added, without much thinking what I said, “ do you live alone ?”

“ Alone ? Oh no. With my wife.”

There was a curious embarrassment in his tone. His eyes were cast down and his head moved uneasily.

We began to talk of the books on the stall, and turning away together continued our conversation. Christopherson was not only a well-bred but a very intelligent and even learned man. On his giving some proof of erudition (with the excessive modesty which characterized him), I asked whether he wrote. No, he had never written

anything—never ; he was only a bookworm, he said. Thereupon he crowed faintly and took his leave.

It was not long before we again met by chance. We came face to face at a street corner in my neighbourhood, and I was struck by a change in him. He looked older ; a profound melancholy darkened his countenance ; the hand he gave me was limp, and his pleasure at our meeting found only a faint expression.

“ I am going away,” he said in reply to my inquiring look. “ I am leaving London.”

“ For good ?”

“ I fear so, and yet ”—he made an obvious effort—“ I am glad of it. My wife’s health has not been very good lately. She had need of country air. Yes, I am glad we have decided to go away—very glad—very glad indeed !”

I was on the point of asking what part of the country he had chosen for his retreat, when he abruptly added :

“ I live just over there. Will you let me show you my books ?”

Of course I gladly accepted the invitation, and a couple of minutes’ walk brought us to a house in a decent street where most of the ground-floor windows showed a card announcing lodgings. As we paused at the door, my companion seemed to hesitate, to regret having invited me.

“ I’m really afraid it isn’t worth your while,” he said timidly. “ The fact is I haven’t space to show my books properly.”

I put aside the objection, and we entered. With anxious courtesy Christopherson led me up the narrow

staircase to the second-floor landing, and threw open a door. On the threshold I stood astonished. The room was a small one, and would in any case have only just sufficed for homely comfort, used as it evidently was for all daytime purposes; but certainly a third of the entire space was occupied by a solid mass of books, volumes stacked several rows deep against two of the walls and almost up to the ceiling. A round table and two or three chairs were the only furniture—there was no room, indeed, for more. The window being shut, and the sunshine glowing upon it, an intolerable stuffiness oppressed the air. Never had I been made so uncomfortable by the odour of printed paper and bindings.

“But,” I exclaimed, “you said you had only a *few* books! There must be five times as many here as I have.”

“I forget the exact number,” murmured Christopherson, in great agitation. “You see, I can’t arrange them properly. I have a few more in—in the other room.”

He led me across the landing, opened another door, and showed me a little bedroom. Here the encumbrance was less remarkable, but one wall had completely disappeared behind volumes, and the bookishness of the air made it a disgusting thought that two persons occupied this chamber every night.

We returned to the sitting-room, Christopherson began picking out books from the solid mass to show me. Talking nervously, brokenly, with now and then a deep sigh or a crow of laughter, he gave me a little light on his history. I learnt that he had occupied these lodgings for the last eight years; that he had been twice married; that the only child he had had, a daughter by his first wife,

had died long ago in childhood ; and lastly—this came in a burst of confidence, with a very pleasant smile—that his second wife had been his daughter's governess. I listened with keen interest, and hoped to learn still more of the circumstances of this singular household.

“ In the country,” I remarked, “ you will no doubt have shelf room ? ”

At once his countenance fell ; he turned upon me a woebegone eye. Just as I was about to speak again sounds from within the house caught my attention ; there was a heavy foot on the stairs, and a loud voice, which seemed familiar to me.

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed Christopherson with a start, “ here comes some one who is going to help me in the removal of the books. Come in, Mr. Pomfret, come in ! ”

Though we only saw each other by chance at long intervals, Pomfret and I were old acquaintances.

“ Hullo ! ” he roared out, “ I didn't know you knew Mr. Christopherson. ”

“ I'm just as much surprised to find that *you* know him ! ” was my reply.

The old book-lover gazed at us in nervous astonishment, then shook hands with the newcomer, who greeted him bluffly, yet respectfully. He came to announce that everything had been settled for the packing and transporting of Mr. Christopherson's library ; it remained only to decide the day.

“ There's no hurry,” exclaimed Christopherson. “ There's really no hurry. I'm greatly obliged to you, Mr. Pomfret, for all the trouble you are taking. We'll settle the date in a day or two—a day or two. ”

With a good-humoured nod Pomfret moved to take his leave. Our eyes met ; we left the house together. Out in the street again I took a deep breath of the summer air, which seemed sweet as in a meadow after that stifling room. My companion evidently had a like sensation, for he looked up to the sky and broadened out his shoulders.

“ Eh, but it’s a grand day ! I’d give something for a walk on Ilkley Moors.”

As the best substitute within our reach we agreed to walk across Regent’s Park together. Pomfret’s business took him in that direction, and I was glad of a talk about Christopherson. I learnt that the old book-lover’s landlady was Pomfret’s aunt. Christopherson’s story of affluence and ruin was quite true. Ruin complete, for at the age of forty he had been obliged to earn his living as a clerk or something of the kind. About five years later came his second marriage.

“ You know Mrs. Christopherson ?” asked Pomfret.

“ No ! I wish I did. Why ?”

“ Because she’s the sort of woman it does you good to know, that’s all. She’s a lady—my idea of a lady. Christopherson’s a gentleman too, there’s no denying it ; if he wasn’t, I think I should have punched his head before now. Oh, I know’em well ! why, I lived in the house with’em for several years. She’s a lady to the end of her little finger, and how her husband can’a borne to see her living the life she has, it’s more than I can understand. By—! I’d have turned burglar, if I could’a found no other way of keeping her in comfort.”

“ She works for her living, then ?”

“ Aye, and for his too. No, not teaching ; she is in

a shop in Tottenham Court Road ; has what they call a good place, and earns thirty shillings a week. It's all they have, but Christopherson buys books out of it."

"But has he never done anything since their marriage?"

"He did for the first few years, I believe, but he had an illness, and that was the end of it. Since then he's only loafed. He goes to all the book-sales, and spends the rest of his time sniffing about the second-hand shops. She? Oh, she'd never say a word! Wait till you you've seen her."

"Well, but," I asked, "what has happened? How is it they're leaving London?"

"Aye, I'll tell you; I was coming to that. Mrs. Christopherson has relatives well off—a fat and selfish lot, as far as I can make out—never lifted a finger to help her until now. One of them's a Mrs. Keeting, the widow of some City porpoise, I'm told. Well, this woman has a home down in Norfolk. She never lives there, but a son of hers goes there to fish and shoot now and then. Well, this is what Mrs. Christopherson tells my aunt, Mrs. Keeting has offered to let her and her husband live down yonder, rent-free, and their food provided. She's to be housekeeper, in fact, and keep the place ready for any one who goes down."

"Christopherson, I can see, would rather stay where he is."

"Why, of course, he doesn't know how he'll live without the book shops. But he's glad for all that, on his wife's account. And it's none too soon, I can tell you. The poor woman couldn't go on much longer; my aunt says

she's just about ready to drop, and sometimes, I know, she looks terribly bad. Of course, she won't own it, not she; she isn't one of the complaining sort. I saw her a week ago, just when she had Mrs. Keeting's offer, and I tell you I scarcely knew who it was! You never saw such a change in any one in your life! Her face was like that of a girl of seventeen. And her laugh—you should have heard her laugh!"

"Is she much younger than her husband?" I asked.

"Twenty years at least. She's about forty, I think."

I mused for a few moments.

"After all, it isn't an unhappy marriage?"

"Unhappy?" cried Pomfret. "Why, there's never been a disagreeable word between them, that I'll warrant. Once Christopherson gets over the change, they'll have nothing more in the world to ask for. He'll potter over his books—"

"You mean to tell me," I interrupted, "that those books have all been bought out of his wife's thirty shillings a week?"

"No, no. To begin with, he kept a few out of his old library. Then, when he was earning his own living, he bought a great many. He told me once that he's often lived on sixpence a day to have money for books. A rum old owl; but for all that he's a gentleman, and you can't help liking him. I shall be sorry when he's out of reach."

For my own part, I wished nothing better than to hear of Christopherson's departure. The story I had heard made me uncomfortable. It was good to think

of that poor woman rescued at last from her life of toil, and in these days of midsummer free to enjoy the country she loved. I promised myself to call on Christopherson in a day or two. By choosing Sunday, I might perhaps be lucky enough to see his wife.

And on Sunday afternoon I was on the point of setting forth to pay this visit, when in came Pomfret. He wore a surly look, and kicked clumsily against the furniture as he crossed the room. His appearance was a surprise, for though I had given him my address, I did not in the least expect that he would come to see me.

“Did you ever hear the like of *that*!” he shouted, half angrily. “It’s all over. They’re not going. And all because of those blamed books!”

And growling, he made known what he had just learnt at his aunt’s home. On the previous afternoon the Christopherson’s had been surprised by a visit from their relative and would-be benefactress, Mrs. Keeting. Never before had that lady called upon them; she came, no doubt (this could only be conjectured), to speak with them of their approaching removal. The close of the conversation (a very brief one) was overheard by the landlady, for Mrs. Keeting spoke loudly as she descended the stairs. “Impossible! Quite impossible! I couldn’t think of it! How could you dream for a moment that I would let you fill my house with musty old books? Most unhealthy! I never knew anything so extraordinary in my life, never!” And so she went out to her carriage, and was driven away. And the landlady, presently having occasion to go upstairs, was aware of a dead silence in the room where the Christopherson’s were sitting. She knocked—prepared with

some excuse—and found the couple side by side, smiling sadly. At once they told her the truth. Mrs. Keeting had come because of a letter in which Mrs. Christopherson had mentioned the fact that her husband had a good many books, and hoped he might be permitted to remove them to the house in Norfolk. She came to see the library—with the result already heard. They had the choice between sacrificing the books and losing what their relative offered.

“Christopherson refused?” I let fall.

“I suppose his wife saw that it was too much for him. At all events, they’d agreed to keep the books and lose the house. And there’s an end of it. I haven’t been so riled about anything for a long time!”

Meantime I had been reflecting. It was easy for me to understand Christopherson’s state of mind, and without knowing Mrs. Keeting, I saw that she must be a person whose benefactions would be a good deal of a burden. After all, was Mrs. Christopherson so very unhappy? Was she not the kind of woman who lived by sacrifice—one who had far rather lead a life disagreeable to herself than change it at the cost of discomfort to her husband? This view of the matter irritated Pomfret. It was an “infernal shame,” that was all he could say. And after all, I rather inclined to his opinion.

When two or three days had passed, curiosity drew me towards the Christopherson’s dwelling. Walking along the opposite side of the street, I looked up at their window, and there was the face of the old bibliophile. Evidently he was standing at the window in idleness, perhaps in trouble. At once he beckoned to me; but

before I could knock at the house-door he had descended, and came out.

"May I walk a little way with you?" he asked.

There was worry on his features. For some moments we went on in silence.

"So you have changed your mind about leaving London?" I said, as if carelessly.

"You have heard from Mr. Pomfret? Well—yes, yes—I think we shall stay where we are—for the present."

Never have I seen a man more painfully embarrassed. He walked with head bent, shoulders stooping; and shuffled, indeed, rather than walked. Even so might a man bear himself who felt guilty of some peculiar meanness.

Presently words broke from him.

"To tell you the truth, there's a difficulty about the books." He glanced furtively at me, and I saw he was trembling in all his nerves. "As you see, my circumstances are not brilliant." He half-choked himself with a crow. "The fact is we were offered a house in the country on certain condition, by a relative of Mrs. Christopherson; and unfortunately, it turned out that my library is regarded as an objection—a fatal objection. We have quite reconciled ourselves to staying where we are."

I could not help asking, without emphasis, whether Mrs. Christopherson would have cared for life in the country. But no sooner were the words out of my mouth than I regretted them; so evidently they hit my companion in a tender place.

"I think she would have liked it," he answered, with a strangely pathetic look at me, as if he entreated my forbearance.

"But," I suggested, "couldn't you make some arrangements about the books? Couldn't you take a room for them in another house, for instance?"

Christopherson's face was sufficient answer; it reminded me of his pennilessness. "We think no more about it," he said. "The matter is settled—quite settled."

There was no pursuing the subject. At the next parting of the ways we took leave of each other.

I think it was not more than a week later when I received a postcard from Pomfret. He wrote: "Just as I expected. Mrs. C. seriously ill." That was all.

Mrs. C. could, of course, only mean Mrs. Christopherson. I mused over the message—it took hold of my imagination, wrought upon my feelings; and that afternoon I again walked along the interesting street.

There was no face at the window. After a little hesitation I decided to call at the house and speak with Pomfret's aunt. It was she who opened the door to me.

We had never seen each other, but when I mentioned my name and said I was anxious to hear news of Mrs. Christopherson, she led me into a sitting-room, and began to talk confidentially.

She was a good-natured Yorkshirewoman, very unlike the common London landlady. "Yes, Mrs. Christopherson had been taken ill two days ago. It began with a long fainting fit. She had a feverish sleepless night; the doctor was sent for; and he had her removed out of the stuffy, book-cumbered bedroom into another chamber, which luckily happened to be vacant. There she lay utterly weak and worn, all but voiceless, able only to smile at her husband, who never moved from the

bedside day or night. He too," said the landlady, "would soon break down: he looked like a ghost, and seemed 'half-crazed'."

"What," I asked, "could be the cause of this illness?"

The good woman gave me an odd look, shook her head, and murmured that the reason was not far to seek.

"Did she think," I asked, "that disappointment might have something to do with it?"

Why, of course, she did. For a long time the poor lady had been all but at the end of her strength, and *this* came as a blow beneath which she sank.

"Your nephew and I have talked about it," I said. "He thinks that Mr. Christopherson didn't understand what a sacrifice he asked his wife to make."

"I think so too," was the reply. "But he begins to see it now, I can tell you. He says nothing but——."

There was a tap at the door, and a hurried tremulous voice begged the landlady to go upstairs.

"What is it, sir?" she asked.

"I'm afraid she's worse," said Christopherson, turning his haggard face to me with startled recognition. "Do come up at once, please."

Without a word to me he disappeared with the landlady. I could not go away; for some ten minutes I fidgeted about the little room, listening to every sound in the house. Then came a footfall on the stairs, and the landlady rejoined me.

"It's nothing," she said. "I almost think she might drop off to sleep, if she's left quiet. He worries her, poor man, sitting there and asking her every two minutes how

she feels. I've persuaded him to go to his room, and I think it might do him good if you went and had a bit o' talk with him."

I mounted at once to the second-floor sitting-room, and found Christopherson sunk upon a chair, his head falling forwards, the image of despairing misery. As I approached he staggered to his feet. He took my hand in a shrinking, shamefaced way, and could not raise his eyes. I uttered a few words of encouragement, but they had the opposite effect to that designed.

"Don't tell me that," he moaned, half resentfully. "She's dying—she's dying—say what they will, I know it."

"Have you a good doctor?"

"I think so—but it's too late, it's too late."

As he dropped to his chair again I sat down by him. The silence of a minute or two was broken by a thunderous rat-tat at the house-door. Christopherson leapt to his feet, rushed from the room; I, half fearing that he had gone mad, followed to the head of the stairs.

In a moment he came up again, limp and wretched as before.

"It was the postman," he muttered. "I am expecting a letter."

Conversation seeming impossible, I shaped a phrase preliminary to withdrawal; but Christopherson would not let me go.

"I should like to tell you," he began, looking at me like a dog under punishment, "that I have done all I could. As soon as my wife fell ill, and when I saw—I had only begun to think of it in that way—how she fel

the disappointment, I went at once to Mrs. Keeting's house to tell her that I would sell the books. But she was out of town. I wrote to her—I said I regretted my folly—I entreated her to forgive me and to renew her kind offer. There has been plenty of time for a reply, but she doesn't answer."

He had in his hand what I saw was a bookseller's catalogue, just delivered by the postman. Mechanically he tore off the wrapper and even glanced over the first page. Then, as if conscience stabbed him, he flung the thing violently away.

"The chance has gone!" he exclaimed, taking a hurried step or two along the little strip of floor left free by the mountain of books. "Of course she said she would rather stay in London! Of course she said what she knew would please me! When—when did she ever say anything else. And I was cruel enough—base enough—to let her make the sacrifice!" He waved his arms frantically. "Didn't I know what it cost her? Couldn't I see in her face how her heart leapt at the hope of going to live in the country! I knew what she was suffering; I *knew* it, I tell you! And, like a selfish coward, I let her suffer—I let her drop down and die—die!"

"Any hour," I said, "may bring you the reply from Mrs. Keeting. Of course, it will be favourable, and the good news—"

"Too late, I have killed her! That woman won't write. She's one of the vulgar rich, and we offended her pride; and such as she never forgive."

He sat down for a moment, but started up again in an agony of mental suffering.

“She is dying—and there, there, that’s what has killed her!” He gesticulated wildly towards the books. “I have sold her life for these. Oh!—oh!”

With this cry he seized half a dozen volumes, and, before I could understand what he was about, he had flung up the window-sash, and cast the books into the street. Another batch followed; I heard the thud upon the pavement. Then I caught him by the arm, held him fast, begged him to control himself.

“They shall go!” he cried. “I loathe the sight of them. They have killed my dear wife!”

He said it sobbing, and at the last words tears streamed from his eyes. I had no difficulty now in restraining him. He met my look with a gaze of infinite pathos, and talked on while he wept.

“If you knew what she has been to me! When she married me I was a ruined man twenty years older. I have given her nothing but toil and care. You shall know everything—for years and years I have lived on the earnings of her labour. Worse than that, I have starved her to buy books. Oh, the shame of it! The wickedness of it! She never blamed me; never a word—nay, not a look—of a reproach. I lived in idleness. I never tried to save her that daily toil at the shop.”

Some one was knocking at the door. I went to open, and saw the landlady, her face set in astonishment, and her arms full of books.

“It’s all right,” I whispered. “Put them down on the floor there; don’t bring them in. An accident.”

Christopherson stood behind me; his look asked what he durst not speak. I said it was nothing, and by degrees

brought him into a calmer state. Luckily, the doctor came before I went away, and he was able to report a slight improvement. Christopherson asked me to come again before long—there was no one else, he said, who cared anything about him—and I promised to call the next day.

I did so, early in the afternoon. Christopherson must have watched for my coming; before I could raise the knocker the door flew open, and his face gleamed such a greeting as astonished me. He grasped my hand in both his.

“The letter has come! We are to have the house.”

“And how is Mrs. Christopherson?”

“Better, much better, Heaven be thanked! The letter came by the first post, and I told her—not the whole truth,” he added, under his breath. “She thinks I am to be allowed to take the books with me; and if you could have seen her smile of contentment. But they will all be sold and carried away before she knows about it; and when she sees that I don’t care a snap of the fingers—!”

He had turned into the sitting-room on the ground floor. Walking about excitedly, Christopherson gloried in the sacrifice he had made. Already a letter was dispatched to a bookseller, who would buy the whole library as it stood. But would he not keep a few volumes? I asked. Surely there could be no objection to a few shelves of books; and how would he live without them? At first he declared vehemently that not a volume should be kept—he never wished to see a book again as long as he lived. But Mrs. Christopherson? I urged. Would she not be glad of something to read now and then? At this he grew

pensive. We discussed the matter, and it was arranged that a box should be packed with select volumes and taken down into Norfolk together with the rest of their luggage. Not even Mrs. Keeting could object to this, and I strongly advised him to take her permission for granted.

And so it was done. By discreet management the piled volumes were stowed in bags, carried downstairs, emptied into a cart, and conveyed away, so quietly that the sick woman was aware of nothing.

Before they left London, I saw Mrs. Christopherson—a pale, thin, slightly made woman, who had never been what is called good-looking, but her face, if ever face did so, declared a brave and loyal spirit. She was not joyous, she was not sad ; but in her eyes, as I looked at them again and again, I read the profound thankfulness of one to whom fate has granted her soul's desire.

THE STOLEN BACILLUS

HERBERT GEORGE WELLS

"This again," said the Bacteriologist, slipping a glass slide under the microscope, "is a preparation of the celebrated Bacillus of Cholera—the cholera germ."

The pale-faced man peered down the microscope. He was evidently not accustomed to that kind of thing, and held a limp, white hand over his disengaged eye. "I see very little," he said.

"Touch this screw," said the Bacteriologist; "perhaps the microscope is out of focus for you. Eyes vary so much. Just the fraction of a turn this way or that."

"Ah! now I see," said the visitor. "Not so very much to see after all. Little streaks and shreds of pink. And yet those little particles, those mere atoms, might multiply and devastate a city! Wonderful!"

He stood up, and releasing the glass slip from the microscope, held it in his hand towards the window. "Scarcely visible," he said, scrutinising the preparation. He hesitated. "Are these—alive? Are they dangerous now?"

"Those have been stained and killed," said the Bacteriologist. "I wish, for my own part, we could kill and stain every one of them in the universe."

"I suppose," the pale man said with a slight smile, "that you scarcely care to have such things about you in the living—in the active state?"

"On the contrary, we are obliged to," said the

Bacteriologist. "Here, for instance....." He walked across the room and took up one of the several sealed tubes. "Here is the living thing. This is a cultivation of the actual living disease bacteria." He hesitated. "Bottled cholera, so to speak."

A slight gleam of satisfaction appeared momentarily in the face of the pale man. "It's a deadly thing to have in your possession," he said, devouring the little tube with his eyes. The Bacteriologist watched the morbid pleasure in his visitor's expression. This man, who had visited him that afternoon with a note of introduction from an old friend, interested him from the very contrast of their dispositions. The lank black hair and deep grey eyes, the haggard expression and nervous manner, the fitful yet keen interest of his visitor were a novel change from the cold deliberations of the ordinary scientific worker with whom the Bacteriologist chiefly associated.

He held the tube in his hand thoughtfully. "Yes, here is the pestilence imprisoned. Only break such a little tube as this into a supply of drinking water, say to these minute particles of life that one must needs examine with the highest powers of the microscope even to see, and that one can neither smell nor taste—say to them, 'Go forth, increase and multiply, and replenish the cisterns,' and death—mysterious, untraceable death, death swift and terrible, death full of pain and indignity—would be released upon this city, and go hither and thither seeking his victims. Here he would take the husband from the wife, here the child from its mother, here the statesman from his duty, and here the toiler from his

trouble. He would follow the water-mains creeping along streets, picking out and punishing a house here and a house there where they did not boil their drinking-water, creeping into the wells of the mineral-water makers, getting washed into salad, and lying dormant in ices. He would wait ready to be drunk in the horse-troughs and by unwary children in the public fountains. He would soak into the soil, to reappear in springs and wells at a thousand unexpected places. Once start him at the water supply, and before we could ring him in, and catch him again, he would have decimated the metropolis."

He stopped abruptly. He had been told rhetoric was his weakness.

"But he is quite safe here, you know—quite safe."

The pale-faced man nodded. His eyes shone. He cleared his throat. "Those Anarchist-rascals," said he, "are fools, blind fools—to use bombs when this kind of thing is attainable. I think....."

A gentle rap, a mere light touch of the finger-nails, was heard at the door. The Bacteriologist opened it. "Just a minute, dear," whispered his wife.

When he re-entered the laboratory his visitor was looking at his watch. "I had no idea I had wasted an hour of your time," he said. "Twelve minutes to four. I ought to have left here by half-past three. But your things were really too interesting. No, positively I cannot stop a moment longer. I have an engagement at four."

He passed out of the room repeating his thanks and the Bacteriologist accompanied him to the door and then returned thoughtfully along the passage, to his laboratory.

He was musing on the ethnology of his visitor. Certainly the man was not a Teutonic type nor a common Latin one. "A morbid product, anyhow, I am afraid," said the Bacteriologist to himself. "How he gloated on those cultivations of disease-germs!" A disturbing thought struck him. He turned to the bench, and then very quickly to his writing-table. Then he felt hastily in his pockets, and then rushed to the door. "I may have put it down on the hall table," he said.

"Minnie!" he shouted hoarsely in the hall.

"Yes, dear," came a remote voice.

"Had I anything in my hand when I spoke to you, dear, just now?"

Pause.

"Nothing, dear, because I remember....."

"Blue ruin!" cried the Bacteriologist, and incontinently ran to the front door and down the steps of his house to the street.

Minnie, hearing the door slam violently, ran in alarm to the window. Down the street a slender man was getting into a cab. The Bacteriologist, hatless and in his carpet slippers, was running and gesticulating wildly towards him. One slipper came off, but he did not wait for it. "He has gone *mad*!" said Minnie. "It's that horrid science of his;" and, opening the window, would have called after him. The slender man, suddenly glancing round, seemed struck with the same idea of mental disorder. He, pointing hastily to the Bacteriologist, said something to the cabman, the door of the cab slammed, the whip swished, the horses' feet chattered, and in a moment the cab, with the Bacteriologist hotly in pursuit,

had receded up the vista of the roadway and disappeared round the corner.

Minnie remained straining out of the window for a minute. Then she drew her head back into the room again. She was dumbfounded. "Of course he is eccentric," she meditated. "But running about London—in the height of the season too—in his socks!" A happy thought struck her. She hastily put on her hat, seized his shoes, went into the hall, took down his hat and light overcoat from the pegs, emerged upon the doorstep, and hailed a cab that opportunely crawled by. "Drive me up the road and round Havelock Crescent and see if we can find a gentleman running about in a velveteen coat and no hat."

"Velveteen coat, ma'am, and no hat. Very good ma'am." And the cabman whipped up at once in the most matter-of-fact way, as if he drove to this address every day of his life.

Some few minutes later the little group of cabmen and loafers that collect round the cabmen's shelter at Haverstock Hill were startled by the passing of a cab driven furiously.

They were silent as it went by, and then as it receded..... "That's Harry Hicks. What's *he* got?" said the stout gentleman known as Old Tootles.

"He's using his whip, he is," said the ostler boy.

"Hullo!" said poor old Tommy Byles; "here's another lunatic."

"It's old George," said old Tootles, "and he's drivin' a lunatic *as* you say."

The group round the cabman's shelter became animated.

Chorus: "Go it, George!" "It's a race." "You'll catch, 'em!" "Whip up!"

"She's a goer, she is!" said the ostler boy. "Well," cried old Tootles, "I'm goin' to begin in a minute. Here's another comin'. If all the cabs in Hampstead haven't gone mad this morning!"

"It's a female this time," said the ostler boy.

"She is following *him*," said old Tootles.

"Usually the other way about."

"What's she got in her hand?"

"Looks like a high hat."

"What a lark it is! Three to one on old George," said the ostler boy. "Next!"

Minnie went by in a perfect roar of applause. She did not like it, but she felt that she was doing her duty, and whirled on down Haverstock Hill and Camden Town High Street with her eyes ever intent on the animated back view of old George, who was driving her vagrant husband so incomprehensibly away from her.

The man in the foremost cab sat crouched in the corner, his arms tightly folded, and the little tube that contained such vast possibilities of destruction gripped in his hand. His mood was a singular mixture of fear and exultation. Chiefly he was afraid of being caught before he could accomplish his purpose, and behind this was a vaguer but larger fear of the awfulness of his crime. But his exultation far exceeded his fear. No Anarchist before him had ever approached this conception of his. All those distinguished persons whose fame he had envied dwindled into insignificance beside him. He had only to make sure of the water supply, and break the tube into a

reservoir. How brilliantly he had planned it, forged the letter of introduction and got into the laboratory, and how brilliantly he had seized his opportunity. The world should hear of him at last. All those people who had sneered at him, neglected him, preferred other people to him, found his company undesirable, should consider him at last. Death, death, death! They had always treated him as a man of no importance. All the world had been in a conspiracy to keep him under. He would teach them yet what it is to isolate a man. What was this familiar street? Great Saint Andrew's Street, of course! How fared the chase! The Bacteriologist was scarcely fifty yards behind. That was bad. He would be caught and stopped yet. He felt in his pocket for money, and found half-a-sovereign. This he thrust up through the trap in the top of the cab into the man's face. "More," he shouted, "if only *we* get away."

The money was snatched out of his hand. "Right you are," said the cabman, and the trap slammed, and the lash lay along the glistening side of the horse. The cab swayed, and the Anarchist, half-standing under the trap, put the hand containing the little glass tube upon the door to preserve his balance. He felt the brittle thing crack, and the broken half of it rang upon the floor of the cab. He fell back into the seat with a curse and stared dismally at the two or three drops of moisture on the floor.

He shuddered.

"Well! I suppose I shall be the first. *Phew!* Anyhow I shall be a martyr. That's something. But it is a filthy death, nevertheless. I wonder if it hurts as much as they say."

Presently a thought occurred to him—he groped between his feet. A little drop was still in the broken end of the tube and he drank that to make sure. It was better to make sure. At any rate, he would not fail.

Then it dawned upon him that there was no further need to escape the Bacteriologist. In Wellington Street he told the cabman to stop, and got out. He slipped on the step, and his head felt queer. It was rapid stuff this cholera poison. He waved his cabman out of existence, so to speak, and stood on the pavement with his arms folded upon his breast awaiting the arrival of the Bacteriologist. There was something tragic in his pose. He greeted his pursuer with a defiant laugh.

“Long live Anarchy! You are too late, my friend. I have drunk it. The cholera is abroad!”

The Bacteriologist from his cab beamed curiously at him through his spectacles. “You have drunk it! An Anarchist! I see now.” He was about to say something more, and then checked himself. A smile hung in the corner of his mouth. He opened the door of his cab as if to descend, at which the Anarchist waved him a dramatic farewell and strode off towards Waterloo Bridge, carefully jostling his infected body against as many people as possible. The Bacteriologist was so preoccupied with the vision of him that he scarcely manifested the slightest surprise at the appearance of Minnie upon the pavement with his hat and shoes and overcoat. “Very good of you to bring my things,” he said, and remained lost in contemplation of the receding figure of the Anarchist.

“You had better get in,” he said, still staring. Minnie felt absolutely convinced now that he was mad,

and directed the cabman home on her own responsibility. "Put on my shoes? Certainly dear," said he, as the cab began to turn, and hid the strutting black figure, now small in the distance, from his eyes. Then suddenly something grotesque struck him, and he laughed. Then he remarked, "It is really very serious, though."

"You see, that man came to my house to see me, and he is an Anarchist. No—don't faint, or I cannot possibly tell you the rest. And I wanted to astonish him not knowing he was an Anarchist, and took up a cultivation of that new species of Bacterium that infest, and I think cause, the blue patches upon various monkeys; and like a fool I said it was Asiatic cholera. And believing it was cholera he ran away with it to poison the water of London, and he certainly might have made things look blue for this civilized city. And now he has swallowed it. Of course, I cannot say what will happen, but you know it turned that kitten blue, and the three puppies in patches, and the sparrow bright blue. But the bother is, I shall have all the trouble and expense of preparing some more."

"Put on my coat on this hot day! Why? Because we might meet Mrs. Jabber. My dear, Mrs. Jabber is not a draught. But why should I wear a coat on a hot day because of Mrs..... Oh! *very* well."

DEATH, FIRE, AND LIFE

ARNOLD BENNETT

Mr. Curtenty lay in bed in the winter morning darkness, and reflected upon the horrible injustice of destiny. Mr. Curtenty was a most respectable gentleman. He had never done anything wrong; his conscience was sinless. In sixty years his dignity and his respectability had not been even compromised. He could, and he did, look everybody unyieldingly in the face. By nature and long practice he was intensely proud and independent. All the world addressed him as 'Mr.' Once he had lost a situation through his employer omitting the 'Mr.' Nevertheless he had soon obtained a new situation, which unhappily he had lost through the death of the new employer.

Since that disaster—now rather more than a year ago—he had been workless, and therefore wageless. Society seemed to blame him for being sixty years old. The fact that he had no particular trade also counted against him. He had always had posts such as watchman, doorkeeper, timekeeper, inspector—posts which meant doing nothing with dignity. Hence no doubt his feeling of superiority to people who actually did things.

Somehow he could scarce hide this feeling—even from his daughter's husband, who secretly resented it. Jim Crowther was a young miner living at Longshaw, and in the opinion of Mr. Curtenty, Jim's wife, Harriet, had

married beneath her. Mr. Curtenty was mistaken in supposing that he had concealed this opinion from Jim and Harriet. Every week he disliked Jim and Harriet more and more, because they were contributing to his subsistence. They were not so crude in their methods of charity as to give him money direct. Certainly not. Such clumsiness would have made an everlasting breach between the two generations. Mr. Curtenty knew naught, officially, of any help. Only it invariably happened that when Mr. Curtenty had not a shilling, Mrs. Curtenty had ten shillings or so. Mr. Curtenty was diplomatic enough never to enquire whence she had obtained the money.

Thus the twelve lean months had run unsatisfactorily on.

But a crisis was now upon Mr. Curtenty. For his wife had told him that Harriet had told her that Jim had told Harriet that Mrs. Curtenty could go and live with Crowthers at Longshaw if she liked, and Mr. Curtenty too. And little by little Mr. Curtenty was given to understand that either he must submit to this humiliation—or starve. Well, Mr. Curtenty had his pride, and he swore to himself that he would not submit to it. He simply could not imagine himself as a helpless pauper dependent in the home of his son-in-law. He conveyed his decision to Mrs. Curtenty, and the next thing he heard was that if he wouldn't go she would! He saw well enough that the notion was to force him into submission! As if anybody could force him into submission!

Two days previously, it being then a Wednesday, Mr. Curtenty had been informed that Mrs. Curtenty would migrate to Longshaw at the end of the week,

Saturday. It was now Friday. The supreme catastrophe was indeed shaping. All his life Mr. Curtenty had worried about the future, and his relatives and acquaintances had laughed at him for worrying. But was he not justified by the event? Had he ever been wrong? They twitted him about being miserly. He was not miserly. He had always been careful, and was he not now justified of his carefulness also? Financially, there was the matter of the Post Office Savings Bank account. They did not positively accuse him of keeping a private hoard in the Post Office Savings Bank; but they hinted at it, and no amount of denials by him would stop their hints.

His ear caught a *puffpuff-puffpuff*, the same being the first irregular coughings of the engine of Clayhanger's Steam-Printing Works, which extended from Duck Bank down the opposite side of the lane. These coughings were Mr. Curtenty's morning clock—he had no other, nor watch either. Soon followed the sound of sirens from different parts of the town of Bursley. The hour was seven. Mr. Curtenty slid out of bed, and began to dress. He did everything with deliberation. He even looked for work—when he looked for it—with deliberation. (But he had an idea that work ought to look for him.) His nature demanded that he should always have plenty of time in front of him. Time was the basis of dignity; hurry was the enemy of dignity. The first part of his dressing he did in the dark. Then he lit a candle, behind the bed's head, and with a morsel of blacking and an old stumpy brush he softly cleaned his boots—or such poor fragments of them as were left to clean. •

In a dignified way he was sorry for his young and ingenuous, quietly grumbling wife. Not really young, for she was the mother of a mother! But he, at thirty, had married her at nineteen, and to him she had always remained curiously young. There she lay on the verge of fifty, and looking to the impartial observer more than her age, but to him, in her tranquil, pathetic sleep, she seemed rather like a girl. Yes, he was sorry for her.....So she intended on the morrow to migrate to her daughter's at Longshaw, whether he went or not! Unless he yielded she meant to leave him—leave him to his own devices. It had come to that.

On the old tin tray was just enough bread, and bits of cured fish to last them till the next morning. Thenceforward, the fiat had been issued from Longshaw, there were to be no more supplies. And then what? He knew that his wife was wondering, and Harriet was wondering, and Jim was wondering what the obstinate, secretive old man would do—what would happen. He alone knew what would happen.

When he had laced his boots under the candle, and combed his hair, he extinguished the candle and finished his toilet in the dark. But the dark was now twilight; the earth was revolving as usual, and in its revolution baring Bursley to the dawn. Mr. Curtenty buttoned his greenish jacket, tied an antique woollen muffler round his collarless neck, put on his cap, and went forth into Woodisun Lane.

He knew he would be too early. He always was too early. He paced smartly but with dignity about Duck Square. Mr. Curtenty stamped his feet into the pavement

and rubbed his hands, for January mornings are always dank and chill in the Five Towns. Yet while doing this he pretended with dignity not to feel the cold. At last he descried the postman, and returned to the front door of the cottage in which he occupied one room ; and he received the postman majestically on the door-step.

‘ Good morning,’ said the genial postman.

‘ Good morning to you,’ said Mr. Curtenty, grandly, and took from the postman a small blue official envelope.

In the privacy of the cottage stairs he opened the envelope. Its contents were quite in order : an authority to withdraw the sum of two shillings from the Savings Bank department of the Post Office. Then Mr. Curtenty drew from his breast-pocket a yellowish bank-book, which showed that twenty pounds stood to his credit, and he carefully put the withdrawal form within the book and replaced the book in his pocket.

Surely you are not surprised ! A prudent man must have something up his sleeve for the last emergencies. Mr. Curtenty had maintained that twenty pounds in reserve throughout a year of privation and humiliation. He had lied about it for a year and more than a year. No matter how terrible a plight you may be in, it is always possible to conceive yourself in a still worse plight. That twenty pounds was Mr. Curtenty’s bulwark against the imaginable worse—the fear of which had plagued him for forty years. It was the last defence and resource of his independence.

‘ Where ye been ?’ asked his waking wife, as he re-entered their home.

‘ Getting a breath of air,’ said Mr. Curtenty.

II.

In the evening about half-past seven, Mrs. Curtenty was lying in bed (for warmth) and Mr. Curtenty was sitting on one of the two chairs, all in the dark, when Mr. Curtenty, after a little shuffling of his legs and scrunching of the chair legs on the bare boards, suddenly rose and felt his way to the door, where his cap and muffler hung on a hook. The pair had had two lean meals and one snack; all the fish was eaten, but not quite all the bread; some tea remained for breakfast. Mr. Curtenty had been abroad once, in the afternoon, and during that period he had cashed the warrant for two shillings. Whether or not his wife had gone out in the same interval he did not know. They had scarcely spoken to each other, not from unfriendliness, but from habit. Not a word had been said about the morrow, or Mr. Curtenty's intentions regarding the morrow. Mrs. Curtenty had not dared to challenge him on the great matter. Indeed, he could not safely be challenged.

Mrs. Curtenty thought to herself now, as she sometimes remarked to her daughter:

‘Things’ll work themselves out if you leave’em alone.’

This was her philosophy in face of Mr. Curtenty’s terrible dignity and independence. All she said was, as Mr. Curtenty fumbled on the cheek of the door:

‘Where ye going?’

And all he replied was:

‘A breath of air.’

He left without looking at the companion of his life. Even if he had looked at her he could not have seen her

in the darkness. Still, he might have lit the last inch of candle for a few seconds and looked at her, for the moment was one of farewell after a companionship of thirty years. But his sentimental emotions had been numbed, frozen by misfortune, by spiritual pride, by privation, by secretiveness, by hidden anger against fate. So he just went. He knew that his young wife would fall asleep and stay asleep.

His brain was absolutely clear. He was not out of his mind, nor out of any part of his mind. In no circumstances would he migrate to his son-in-law's. His wife might go; she indeed would go; and she would be happy there or at least contented. He might of course fend for himself, all alone, for a time on the twenty pounds; but if he did so his family would know for sure that he had a secret hoard after all, and he could not bear that revelation; it would too seriously humiliate him. Moreover, when the twenty pounds was gone—what then? Merely the same unanswerable problem as now! No! He had had enough, and there could be but one answer to the question, To be or not to be?

He made his way to Critchlow's in St. Luke's Square. Critchlow's was the oldest chemist in Bursley. He knew Critchlow slightly. Critchlow's, however, was closed. Monstrous that the shop should be closed on that night of all nights! Holl's clock across the Square showed six minutes to eight, and Critchlow's had no right to be closed until eight. But Critchlow's was closed. The old fellow was allowing himself to become a bit capricious in his later years.

Mr. Curtenty had purposely driven the transaction

as late as convenient, for he desired a deserted, nocturnal town for his moral work ; but he now saw the possibility of having cut the thing too fine. Still, there was Salter's in the Market Place—all on the way to the empty playground, beyond the Town Hall, which he had selected for his end. He walked to the top of the Square, and turned to the right where the Market Place was. He had an idea that Salter's kept open till nine o'clock. Salter's was open, and he entered the shop, which happened to be empty, behind the counter as well as in front of it.

Salter's was the new chemistry in Bursley. Salter, a daring and optimistic fellow from Birmingham, had taken over the old shop from the dying hand of the historic chemist who, for more than fifty years, had sold drugs and given advice to the old-fashioned elite of the old town. Salter had provided a new ideal for the old town. The interior of the shop had been expensively refurnished from floor to high ceiling. It shone ; it glittered ; it was orderly ; it was the cleanest thing in Bursley ; it had an antiseptic, tonic odour ; its clock was accurate ; it offered chairs, mirrors, and a weighing-machine for the use of customers. It displayed more tooth-brushes than a quarter of a century earlier had been employed in the whole of Bursley. Mr. Curtenty was not impressed. He had the native's distaste for and suspicion of all that was ' Showy.'

A fine young gentleman, Mr. Salter himself appeared from the dark backward of the establishment, glided along the length of the counter and became a note of interrogation to Mr. Curtenty, whose tongue—

very surprisingly—clave to his palate and whose throat grew parched.

‘I want some Scheele’s Acid.’

Mr. Salter stared at Mr. Curtenty, and Mr. Curtenty, invigorated and challenged by the stare, returned it.

‘Photographic work?’

Mr. Curtenty nodded. ‘Aye!’

‘How much?’

‘Don’t know. Smallish bottle’

‘Half a pint?’

‘Aye! That’ll do.’

‘I’ll get you to sign the poison book.’

‘Aye!’

Mr. Salter moved about behind the counter, and in a startlingly brief space of time was slapping a poison label on a corked bottle. (Never within Mr. Curtenty’s experience had seconds passed so quickly.) The next instant he had screwed the bottle into a bit of wrapping-paper, and he was in the act of handing it to Mr. Curtenty when a great lady entered the shop and Mr. Salter turned to her with eager and yet dignified deference, excusing himself negligently to Mr. Curtenty.

But Mr. Curtenty held the bottle. He held it victoriously; and it was no longer a bottle in a bit of paper—it was a sacred phial, magic, omnipotent, more powerful than any man. It held the key to the riddle of the future, and the short answer to the arguments of the past. It gave Mr. Curtenty a sense of independence, of dignity, of conquest over earth, such as he had never had. Already he was leaving earth. He had no interest in earth; he was sick of it, disgusted with it. He yearned bitterly to

be quit of it. He had little or no fear. He forgot the teachings of religion and the wrath of God. He was the supreme egotist. He thought of nobody but himself. He was absorbed in himself. Some faint vision of an inquest flickered transiently through his brain. He sniggered at it and it vanished. He was triumphant. He was a hero, a conqueror, a poet.

'One-and-twopence, please,' murmured Mr. Salter, between two respectful sentences addressed to the lady.

'*One-and-twopence!*' cried Mr. Curtenty, dropping the florin which he was holding suspended in mid-pocket. '*One-and-twopence!* Why! It ought not to be more than ten pence-halfpenny!'

'I'm afraid it's one-and-two,' said Mr. Salter calmly.

'Not *me*,' Mr. Curtenty growled, and dropping the bottle on the round india-rubber mat intended to receive coins, he walked with fury and grandeur out of the shop, not caring for forty Salters nor forty great ladies.

He muttered things to himself. Did Salter suppose that *he* was going to help to pay for all the fal-lals of his new shop? Not him. They called him a miser. They might. But fair was fair, and impudence was impudence. Impudence, that was what it was! Impudence! Let Mr. Salter charge his one-and-twopence to those who had quarterly bills and wouldn't pay cash. But not to *him*! He knew to a certainty that Fresson, the 'cash chemist' in Hanbridge, the great price cutter, would sell him half a pint of Scheele's Acid for ten pence, if not nine pence-halfpenny. And to Fresson's he would go. Fresson's did not close until ten o'clock. Fresson was

the friend of the poor and a hard-working man who toiled early and late.....Impudence! Impudence!.....

People passing in the Market Place heard and saw Mr. Curtenty muttering and grumbling to himself. He noticed with resentment that he was observed, and walked off in the direction of Hanbridge. His resolution to carry out his plan was as firm as ever—for nothing could shake it—but he was equally determined not to be done in the eye.

III.

Woodisun Lane is one of the ways from Bursley to Hanbridge. Indeed, from Bursley Market Place it is the shortest and the oldest way, but by far the worst way. However, Mr. Curtenty took it, in order, by a glance at the window of his home, to see whether Mrs. Curtenty was wastefully burning the last inch of the candle. She was not; the window gave no sign of light. Strange to say, Mrs. Curtenty's thriftiness disappointed him, because he wanted another grievance, he wanted dozens of grievances, to gather into his breast as St. Sebastian gathered arrows.

He had to be content with the one great grievance against Mr. Salter—Mr. Salter, who by his rapacity was forcing a determined and desperate man to walk unnecessarily over to Hanbridge on a dank night. Soon, by dint of reflection and savage concentration, the grievance swelled till it filled his whole mind and heart and soul.

Nearly at the top of the hill, at Bleakridge, Woodisun Lane opens into the main thoroughfare, Trafalgar Road.

Somewhat farther on is the football ground, and then there is a corner upon which had stood for centuries a small earthenware manufactory. Young Eddie Colclough had recently razed a small manufactory to the ground and was just finishing the erection of a new one.

As he passed the building Mr. Curtenty's watchman's nose sniffed the air, in the manner of a tiger sniffing distant blood. Mr. Curtenty became a nose and nothing but a nose; and his grievance and his purpose were equally forgotten. It might be said that Mr. Curtenty had no trade, but that he had a profession was richly demonstrated in that sniffing moment. He sniffed the night-watchman's arch-foe—smoke, indicating fire.

He looked at the facade, whose upper windows were still unglazed, and could see no curling wisp of smoke. But he had faith in his nose. Though the gates of the large central archway had not yet been put in place, the archway was stoutly boarded and Mr. Curtenty could not get through it. He ran along and climbed a rough fence at the side of the manufactory, and so reached the back, which was less securely protected than the front from marauders. The next instant he was in the quadrangle, or 'yard' as it is called. And his nose was justified, for he saw smoke rising from a first-floor window. And his eyes detected a faint glow within.

Mr. Curtenty was gloriously alive. The price of Scheele's Acid was nothing to him. He was professionally inspired. He was happy in the midst of calamity and conflagration. He knew the first thing to do and the second thing to do, and did not hesitate a moment. In a quarter of a minute he was in Trafalgar Road again.

A policeman, a policeman to take charge! But there was no policeman. In the Five Towns, so different from other localities, when you are engaged in the practice of virtue and philanthropy there never is a policeman within a mile; it is only when you happen to be delinquent that policemen spring magically out of the earth. At the corner of the tiny Square, in front of Bleakridge's yellow church, burned a red lamp. Dr. Ackerington's of course! Mr. Curtenty, forgetting dignity, ran to the house and violently rang the bell. He rang it three times with increasing violence.

The door opened.

'Here! You're in a hurry,' said a stern, fat, middle-aged maid in a cap and apron, as soon as she had satisfied herself that Mr. Curtenty did not belong to the ruling class.

'Have you got a telephone here?' Mr. Curtenty demanded stiffly.

'And if we have! You can't use it.'

'Who wants for to use it? You tell your master or mistress that Colclough's new pottery works is on fire, and they must telephone for the fire brigade.' And as the wench, startled and impressed and stricken, did not immediately move, he added: 'And be quick!' Then he ran off.

Within the quadrangle of the works once more he descried in the darkness a mound of sand. Seizing one of several buckets which the builder's men had left, he filled it with sand and searched for and found stairs and gingerly mounted them in the black darkness, and guided by his triumphant nose he passed through a corridor and

into a large suffocating room, which room was illuminated by the fire.

Planks of wood were just beginning to crackle. With the sand he smothered their ardour. But there was not enough sand. He descended again, with empty bucket, bungled the stairs, fell, hurt his ankle, swore, limped, got more sand, ascended. After three such ascents he had extinguished the fire and was in darkness.

Mr. Curtenty, his occupation gone, limped through other corridors and rooms until he saw the light of Trafalgar Road street-lamps through an unglazed window. He looked out himself unseen. A crowd, small but increasing, was gazing stolidly up at the facade of the works. It could perceive nothing of interest ; it had no impulse to do anything ; it merely gazed, in the faint hope of witnessing some terrific catastrophe. No policeman ! No fire-engine ! A tramcar roared by, unheeding. Mr. Curtenty continued to look out proud, patient, invisible, scornful of the crowd. He was triumphant—nearly as triumphant as he had been fifty minutes earlier when he held the sacred phial in his hand. What a world ! What destiny !

The expectant crowd in the mire was in due course rewarded by the exciting arrival, from Hanbridge way, of a motor car full of people—Eddie Colclough, a young newly-married wife, and friends. Dr. Ackerington being out, Mrs. Ackerington had telephoned not only to the fire brigade but to Eddie, who lived at Cauldon, between Hanbridge and Oldcastle. Mr. and Mrs. Eddie were entertaining at dinner two gentlemen and a lady, and all being young and adventurous, they had instantly

decided to leave dinner and come in a body to the scene of the announced conflagration.

Mr. Curtenty seeing them and guessing that Mr. Colclough must be among them, went downstairs with pain in his ankle. Eddie, followed by Mrs. Eddie and the others, was in the quadrangle almost before him.

'Where's the fire?' Mr. Colclough demanded fiercely, in bewilderment; he was intensely relieved to see no evidence of a fire, but also—rather illogically—annoyed to see no evidence of a fire.

'It isn't anywhere. I've put it out,' answered Mr. Curtenty, coldly, challengingly.

'And who the devil are you, anyway?' cried Mr. Colclough, who was of an aggressive and hasty disposition.

'Mr. Curtenty's my name,' said Mr. Curtenty, 'and if you'll come upstairs I'll show you a thing or two.'

'Strike a match,' ordered Mr. Colclough at the dark stairs, feeling vainly in his pockets.

'I don't smoke,' said Mr. Curtenty, grimly.

However, one of the other gentlemen had one of the new-fangled electric torches. The six of them stood in the scene of the conflagration and heard Mr. Curtenty's description of the great episode: how he was passing, how his nose gave the alarm, how he sent for the fire brigade, how he used the sand, how he sprained his ankle, and how all's well that ends well; the whole recital being supported by charred timber and the heavy odour of wood-smoke.

The ray of the electric torch lighted Mr. Curtenty's smoke-grimed face. The rest of them—the fashionable aristocracy, including two young and beautiful women—were in shadow. Mr. Curtenty's tale was faultless;

it extorted admiration, a little unwilling perhaps at first from Eddie Colclough, but spontaneous enough from the others, and especially from the women.

‘Well here’s something for you,’ said Mr. Colclough, and handed Mr. Curtenty a sovereign.

‘Thank you.’

‘You must be used to fires,’ said Mrs. Colclough, smiling warmly.

Mr. Curtenty majestically offered some of his personal history.

‘And who are you working for now?’ asked Mr. Colclough.

‘I’m out of work,’ said Mr. Curtenty.

Mr. Colclough paused.

‘What did you say your name was?’

‘Mr. Curtenty.’

‘Well, look here, Curtenty,’ said Mr. Colclough, and paused again as though hesitating in his mind.

Mr. Curtenty did not repine at the rough, careless omission of the ‘Mr.’; experience had been teaching him.

‘Look here, Curtenty. There’s no watchman here yet. D’you want a hob?’

Mr. Curtenty was engaged on the spot.

Suddenly he hurried from the room. The others followed him. The electric torch lighted him from behind. His ears had been copying the excellent example of his nose. He reached one of the front unglazed windows and put his head through a square. A fire engine had arrived with an enormous fluster and bluster and glint of brass helmets. A fine effort on the part of the Bursley Fire Brigade—forty minutes!

Mr. Curtenty bawled angrily, disdainfully, to the brigade :

‘ It’s out ! Get away with your sprinkling machine ! It’s out I tell you.’

Then he turned and faced the torch.

‘ You perfect *duck* !’ exclaimed young Mrs. Colclough, and carried away by gratitude for a great deed, and by her youthful sentimentalism and the comicality of Mr. Curtenty’s dirty tweed cap—in all her beauty and all her finery she put her ringed hands on the shoulders of the old man and kissed his sooty plain face.

IV.

In Duck Square there is an establishment which stays open till a late hour nightly, brilliantly lit amid the surrounding gloom, and which exudes from its interior an odour so appetizing and powerful that it has been known to interfere with the Wednesday evening prayer meeting in the Wesleyan chapel a hundred yards away on the opposite side of Trafalgar Road.

Mr. Curtenty entered this establishment and, pulling a florin from his pocket, bought two plenteous portions of the finest fried fish. He then bought a candle, though candles were not in her line of business, from the white-clad proprietress, who gave him a few matches into the bargain. Then he went across to the fast-closing Dragon Hotel and in the nick of time bought a bottle of beer. Having unlocked the door of the cottage in Woodisun Lane with his own key, he took off his boots at the bottom of the stairs, struck a light, and proceeded upwards, heavily encumbered, into his one-roomed home.

Young Mrs. Curtenty was fast asleep; the blaze of the candle did not awaken her. He examined her face with a new interest. His heart was loudly beating (but that, of course, was the effect of the stairs—what else could it be?). He was vaguely aware, too, of a non-fleshy throbbing, a half-pleasant, half-frightening general disturbance in his mind or his soul or somewhere. He could not quite surely identify the phenomenon. It might have been some imperfect realisation of the dread fact that but for the accident of a fire he would at that moment have been elsewhere, or nowhere at all and nothing at all. On the other hand, it might be due to alarm at his own wild and reckless expenditure in the fried fish shop and the Dragon Hotel.

It was the heavenly odour of the fried fish that first caused his wife to dream a delicious dream and then woke her. As her senses gradually brought her back into the sphere of reality she opened her ingenuous eyes and saw Mr. Curtenty bending over her, candle in hand.

‘Pull yourself together, wench,’ said Mr. Curtenty in a tone so startlingly new and attractive to Mrs. Curtenty that she could not move.

‘Pull yourself together,’ he repeated, ‘and put the blanket round your shoulders.’

‘Jimmy,’ said she, hopefully, ‘then we’ll go to Harriet’s at Longshaw tomorrow.’

‘Not I.’

‘I shall,’ said she sadly. ‘They’ll make me. Yes, lad, I’m going, I am!’ she sighed.

‘You are not,’ he almost shouted. ‘I’ve got a job. Get up and set this fish on a plate.’

THE DINNER-PARTY

EDWARD VERRAL LUCAS

[The dinner-party was at Mr. Wynne's, the father of Naomi, whom Kent Falconer marries. Mr. Dabney was a Radical editor. Lionel is a country cricketer.]

When the evening arrived, it looked as though Grandmamma and Mr. Dabney were going to hit it off perfectly, and I began to feel quite happy about my introduction of this firebrand into the household.

"I hear that you are a writer," Grandmamma began, very graciously. "I always like literary company. Years ago I met both Mr. Dickens and Mr. Thackeray."

I saw the lid of Lionel's left eye droop as he glanced at Naomi. Mrs. Wynne, I gathered, was employing a favourite opening.

Mr. Dabney expressed interest.

"There are no books like theirs now," Grandmamma continued. "I don't know what kind of books you write, but there are no books like those of Mr. Dickens and Mr. Thackeray."

Mr. Dabney began to say something.

"Personally," Grandmamma hurried on, "I prefer those of Mr. Dickens, but that perhaps is because my dear father used to read them to us aloud. He was a beautiful reader. There is no reading aloud today, Mr. Dabney; and, I fear, very little home life."

Here Grandmamma made a false move and let her companion in, for he could never resist a comparison of the present and the past, to the detriment of the present.

"No," he said, "you are quite right." And such was the tension that Grandmamma's remarks had caused that the whole room was silent for him. "We are losing our hold, on all that is most precious. Take London at this moment.....look at the scores and scores of attractions to induce people to leave home in the evenings and break up the family circle.....restaurants, concert rooms, entertainments, theatres. Look at the music-halls. Do you know how many music-halls there are in London and Greater London at this moment?"

"No," said Grandmamma sternly, "I have no notion. I have never entered one."

Lionel shot a glance at me which distinctly said, in his own deplorable idiom, "What price All Pinto?"

Mr. Dabney, I regret to say, intercepted the tail of it, and suddenly realized that he was straying from the wiser path of the passive listener. So he remarked, "Of course not," and brought the conversation back to Boz.

"Mr. Dickens," said Grandmamma, "did me the honour to converse with me in Manchester in the 'sixties. I was there with me dear husband on business, and we stayed in the same hotel as Mr. Dickens, and breakfasted at the same table. The toast was not good, and Mr. Dickens, I remember, compared it in his inimitable way to sawdust. It was a perfect simile. He was very droll. What particularly struck me about him was his eye.....so bright and restless.....and his quick ways. He seemed all nerves. In the course of our conversation I told him I had met Mr. Thackeray, but he was not interested. I remember another thing he said. In paying his bill he gave the waiter a very generous tip, which was the slang

word with which me dear husband always used to describe a *douceur*. 'There,' Mr. Dickens said, as he gave it to the waiter, 'that's.....,' How very stupid! I have forgotten what he said, but it was full of wit. 'There,' he said.....Dear me!"

"Never mind, Grandmamma," said Naomi, "you will think of it presently."

"But it was so droll and clever," said the old lady. "Surely, Alderley dear, I have told you of it?"

"Oh, yes, Mother, many times," said Alderley; "but I can't for the life of me think of it at the moment. Strange, isn't it," he remarked to us all at large, "how often the loss of memory in one person seems to infect others?.....one forgets and all forget. We had a case in Chambers the other day."

Their father's stories having no particular sting in them, his children abandoned him to their mother, who listens devotedly, and we again fell into couples.

But it was useless to attempt disregard of old Mrs. Wynne. There was a feeling in the air that trouble lay ahead, and we all reserved one ear for her.

"And Mr. Thackeray?" Mr. Dabney asked, with an appearance of the deepest interest.

"Mr. Thackeray," said Grandmamma, "I had met in London some years before. It was at a *conversazione* at the Royal Society's. Mr. Wynne and I were leaving at the same time as the great man.....and however you may consider his writings he was great physically.....and there was a little confusion about the cab. Mr. Thackeray thought it was his, and we thought it was ours. Me dear husband, who was the soul of courtesy, pressed him to

take it ; but Mr. Thackeray gave way, with the most charming bow to me. It was raining. A very tall man with a broad and kindly face.....although capable of showing satire.....and gold spectacles. He gave me a charming bow, and said, ' There will be another one for me directly.' I hope there was, for it was raining. Those were, however, his exact words : ' There will be another one for me directly '."

Mr. Dabney expressed himself in suitable terms, and cast a swift glance at his hostess on his other side, as if seeking for relief. She was talking, as it happened, about a novel of the day, in which little but the marital relation is discussed, and Mr. Dabney, on being drawn into the discussion, remarked sententiously, " The trouble with marriage is that while every woman is at heart a mother, every man is at heart a bachelor."

" What was that ?" said Grandmamma, who is not really deaf, but when in a tight place likes to gain time by this harmless imposition. " What did Mr. Dabney say ?" she repeated, appealing to Naomi.

Poor Mr. Dabney turned scarlet.

" Oh, it was nothing, nothing," he said. " Merely a chance remark."

" I don't agree with you," replied Grandmamma severely, thus giving away her little ruse. " There is no trouble with marriage. It is very distressing to me to find this new attitude with regard to that state. When I was a girl we neither talked about incompatibility and temperament and all the rest of it, nor thought about them. We married. I have had to give up my library subscription entirely because they send me nothing

nowadays but nauseous novels about husbands and wives who cannot get on together. I hope," she added, turning swiftly to Mr. Dabney, "that those are not the kind of books that you write."

"Oh, no," said Mr. Dabney; "I don't write books at all."

"Not write books at all?" said Grandmamma. "I understood you were an author."

"No dear," said Naomi, "not an author. Mr. Dabney is an editor. He edits a very interesting weekly paper, *The Balance*. He stimulates others to write."

"I never heard of the paper," said Grandmamma, who is too old to have any pity.

"I must show it to you," said Naomi. "Frank writes for it."

"Very well," said Grandmamma. "But I am disappointed. I thought that Mr. Dabney wrote books. The papers are growing steadily worse, and more and more unfit for general reading, especially in August. I hope," she said, turning to Mr. Dabney again, "you don't write any of those terrible letters in August about home life?"

Mr. Dabney said that he didn't, and Grandmamma began to soften. "I am very fond of literary society," she said. "It is one of my great griefs that there is so little literary society in Ludlow. You are too young, of course, Mr. Dabney, but I am sure it will interest you to know that I knew personally both Mr. Dickens and Mr. Thackeray."

Here a shudder ran round the table, and Lionel practically disappeared into his plate. I stole a glance at

Mr. Dabney's face. Drops of perspiration were beginning to break out on his forehead.

"Mr. Dickens," the old lady continued remorselessly, and all unconscious of the devastation she was causing, "Mr. Dickens I met at an Hotel in Manchester in the 'sixties. I was there with ~~me~~ dear husband on business, and we breakfasted at the same table. Mr. Dickens was all nerves and fun. The toast was not good, and I remember he compared it in his inimitable way to sawdust."

Mr. Dabney ate feverishly.

"I remember also that he made a capital joke as he was giving the waiter a tip, as ~~me~~ dear husband always used to call a *douceur*. 'There,' he said——"

Mr. Dabney twisted a silver fork into the shape of hairpin.

It was, of course, Naomi who came to the rescue. "Grandmamma," she said, "we have a great surprise for you.....the first dish of strawberries."

"So early!" said the old lady. "How very extravagant of you, but how very pleasant." She took one and ate it slowly, while Mr. Dabney laid the ruined fork aside and assumed the expression of a reprieved assassin.

"'Doubtless!'" Grandmamma quoted, "'God could have made a better berry, but doubtless He never did.' Do you know," she asked Mr. Dabney, "who said that? It was a favourite quotation of ~~me~~ fawther's."

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Dabney, who had been cutting it out of articles every June for years, "it was Bishop Butler."

The situation was saved, for Grandmamma talked exclusively of fruit for the rest of the meal. Ludlow, it seems, has some very beautiful gardens, especially Dr. Sworder's, which is famous for its figs.

At one moment, however, we all went cold again, for Lionel, who is merciless, suddenly asked in a silence. "Didn't you once meet Thackeray, Grandmamma?"

Naomi, however, was too quick for him, and before the old lady could begin she had signalled to her mother to lead the way to the drawing-room.

THE INVISIBLE MAN

GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON

In the cool blue twilight of two steep streets in Camden Town, the shop at the corner, a confectioner's, glowed like the butt of a cigar. One should rather say, perhaps, like the butt of a firework, for the light was of many colours, broken up by many mirrors and dancing on many gaily coloured cakes and sweetmeats. Such rainbow provocations could naturally collect the youth of the neighbourhood up to the ages of ten or twelve. But this corner was also attractive to youth at a later stage ; and a young man, not less than twenty-four, was staring into the same shop window. To him, also, the shop was of fiery charm, but this attraction was not wholly to be explained by chocolates ; which, however, he was far from despising.

He was a tall, burly, red-haired young man, with a resolute face but a listless manner. His name was John Turnbull Angus.

Entering at last, he walked through the confectioner's shop into the back room, which was a sort of pastry-cook restaurant, merely raising his hat to the young lady who was serving there. She was a dark, elegant, alert girl in black, with a high colour and very quick, dark eyes ; and after the ordinary interval she followed him into the inner room to take his order.

His order was evidently an usual one. " I want, please," he said, " one halfpenny bun and a small cup of

black coffee." An instant before the girl could turn away he added, "Also, I want you to marry me."

The young lady of the shop stiffened suddenly, said, "Those are jokes I don't allow."

The red-haired young man lifted grey eyes of an unexpected gravity.

"Really and truly," he said, "it's as serious—as serious as the halfpenny bun. It is expensive, like the bun; one pays for it. It is indigestible, like the bun. It hurts."

The dark young lady had never taken her dark eyes off him, but seemed to be studying him with almost tragic exactitude. At the end of her scrutiny she had something like the shadow of a smile, and she sat down in a chair.

"Mr. Angus," she said steadily, "before there is a minute more of this nonsense I must tell you something about myself as shortly as I can."

"Delighted," replied Angus. "You might tell me something about myself, too, while you are about it."

"Oh, do hold your tongue and listen," she said. "It's nothing that I'm ashamed of, and it isn't even anything that I'm specially sorry about."

"To begin with, I must tell you that my father owned the inn called the Red Fish at Ludbury."

"Ludbury is a sleepy, grassy little hole in the Eastern Counties, and the only kind of people who ever came to the 'Red Fish' were occasional commercial travellers, and, for the rest, the most awful people you can see, only you've never seen them. I mean little, loungy men who had just enough to live on and had nothing to do but

bet on horses, in bad clothes that were just too good for them. Even these wretched young rotters were not very common at our house ; but there were two of them that were a lot too common—common in every sort of way. They both lived on money of their own, and were idle and overdressed. But yet I was a bit sorry for them, because each of them had a slight deformity. One of them was a surprisingly small man, something like a dwarf, or at least like a jockey. He was no fool though, though a futile idler ; he was curiously clever at all kinds of things that couldn't be the slightest use ; a sort of conjuring ; making fifteen matches set fire to each other like a regular fire-work ; or cutting a banana or some such thing into a dancing doll. His name was Isidore Smythe.

“ The other fellow was more silent and more ordinary ; but somehow he alarmed me much more than poor little Smythe. He was very tall and slight and light-haired ; but he had one of the most appalling squints I have ever seen or heard of. When he looked straight at you, you didn't know where you were yourself, let alone what he was looking at. He would go for great walks by himself in the flat, grey country all round. His name was James Welkin. And so it was that I was really puzzled, as well as startled, and very sorry, when they both offered to marry me in the same week.

“ Well, I did what I've since thought was perhaps a silly thing. But, after all, these freaks were my friends in a way ; and I had a horror of their thinking I refused them for the real reason, which was that they were so impossibly ugly. So I made up some gas of another sort, about never meaning to marry anyone who hadn't carved

his way in the world. I said it was a point of principle with me not to live on money that was just inherited like theirs. Two days after I had talked in this well-meaning sort of way, the whole trouble began. The first thing I heard was that both of them had gone off to seek their fortunes, as if they were in some silly fairy tale.

"Well, I've never seen either of them from that day to this. But I've had two letters from the little man, called Smythe, and really they were rather exciting."

"Ever heard of the other man?" asked Angus.

"No, he never wrote," said the girl, after an instant's hesitation. "Smythe's first letter was simply to say that he had started out walking with Welkin to London; but Welkin was such a good walker that the little man dropped out of it, and took a rest by the roadside. He happened to be picked up by some travelling show, and, partly because he was nearly a dwarf, and partly because he was really a clever little wretch, he got on quite well in the show business. That was his first letter. His second was much more of a startler, and I only got it last week."

The man called Angus emptied his coffee-cup and regarded her with mild and patient eyes. Her own mouth took a slight twist of laughter as she resumed. "I suppose you've seen the hoardings all about this 'Smythe's Silent Service'? Or you must be the only person that hasn't. Oh, I don't know much about it, it's some clockwork invention for doing all the house-work by machinery. You know the sort of thing: 'Press a Button—A Butler Who Never Drinks.' 'Turn a Handle—Ten Housemaids Who Never Steal.' You

must have seen the advertisements. Well, whatever these machines are, they are making pots of money; and they are making it all for that little imp who I knew down in Ludbury. I can't help feeling pleased the poor little chap has fallen on his feet; but the plain fact is, I'm in terror of his turning up any minute and telling me he's carved his way in the world—as he certainly has."

"And the other man?" repeated Angus.

Laura Hope got to her feet suddenly. "My friend," she said, "I think you are a witch. Yes, you are quite right. I have not seen a line of the other man's writing; and I have no more notion than the dead of what or where he is. But it is of him that I am frightened. It is he who is all about my path. It is he who has half driven me mad. Indeed, I think he has driven me mad; for I have felt him where he could not have been and I have heard his voice when he could not have spoken."

"Well, my dear," said the young man, cheerfully, "if he were Satan himself, he is done for now you have told somebody. One goes mad all alone, old girl. But when was it you fancied you felt and heard our squinting friend?"

"I heard James Welkin laugh as plainly as I hear you speak," said the girl. "There was nobody there, for I stood just outside the shop at the corner, and could see down both streets at once. I had forgotten how he laughed, though his laugh was as odd as his squint. I had not thought of him for nearly a year. But it's a solemn truth that a few seconds later the first letter came from his rival."

"Did you ever make the spectre speak or squeak, or anything?" asked Angus, with some interest.

Laura suddenly shuddered, and then said, "Yes. Just when I had finished reading the second letter from Isidore Smythe announcing his success, just then, I heard Welkin say, 'He shan't have you though.' It was quite plain, as if he were in the room. It is awful; I think I must be mad."

"If you really were mad," said the young man, "you would think you must be sane. But certainly there seems to me to be something a little rum about this unseen gentleman."

Even as he spoke, there was a sort of steely shriek in the street outside, and a small motor, driven at devilish speed, shot up to the door of the shop and stuck there. In the same flash of time a small man in a shiny top hat stood stamping in the outer room.

Angus abruptly went out of the inner room and confronted the newcomer. For a moment the two men, instinctively understanding each other's air of possession, looked at each other with that curious cold generosity which is the soul of rivalry.

Mr. Smythe, however, made no allusion to the ultimate ground of their antagonism, but said simply, "Has Miss Hope seen that thing on the window?"

"On the window?" repeated the staring Angus.

"There's no time to explain other things," said the small millionaire shortly. "There's some tomfoolery going on here that has to be investigated."

He pointed his polished walking-stick at the window, and Angus was astonished to see along the front of the glass

a long strip of paper pasted, which had certainly not been on the window when he had looked through it some time before. Following the energetic Smythe outside into the street, he found that some yard and a half of stamp paper had been carefully gummed along the glass outside, and on this was written, "If you marry Smythe, he will die."

"Laura," said Angus, putting his big red head into the shop, "you're not mad."

"It's the writing of that fellow Welkin," said Smythe gruffly. "I haven't seen him for years, but he's always bothering me. Five times in the last fortnight he's had threatening letters left at my flat, and I can't even find out who leaves them, let alone if it is Welkin himself. The porter of the flats swears that no suspicious characters have been seen, and here he has pasted up a paper on a public shop window, while the people in the shop—"

"Quite so," said Angus modestly, "while the people in the shop were having tea. Well, sir, I can assure you I appreciate your commonsense in dealing so directly with the matter. We can talk about other things afterwards. If you'll take my advice, Mr. Smythe, you'll put this at once in the hands of some energetic inquiry man, private rather than public. I know an extremely clever fellow, who has set up in business five minutes from here in your car. His name's Flambeau. He lives in Lucknow Mansions, Hampstead."

"That is odd," said the little man. "I live, myself, in Himalaya Mansions, round the corner. Perhaps you might care to come with me; I can go to my rooms and

sort out these queer Welkin documents, while you run round and get your friend the detective."

"You are very good," said Angus politely. "Well, the sooner we act the better."

Both men, took the same sort of formal farewell of the lady, and both jumped into the brisk little car. As Smythe took the handles and they turned the great corner of the street, Angus was amused to see a big poster of "Smythe's Silent Service" with a picture of a huge headless iron doll, carrying a saucepan with the legend, "A Cook Who Is Never Cross."

"I use them in my own flat," said the little black-bearded man, laughing, "partly for advertisement, and partly for real convenience. Honestly, those big clock-work dolls of mine do bring you coals or a time-table quicker than any live servants I've ever known, if you know which knob to press. But I'll never deny that such servants have their disadvantages, too."

"Indeed?" said Angus; "is there something they can't do?"

"Yes," replied Smythe coolly; "they can't tell me who left those threatening letters at my flat."

The man's motor was small and swift like himself; in fact, like his domestic service, it was of his own invention. If he was an advertising quack, he was one who believed in his own wares. As the car swept on, it passed, at one corner, the stray stall of a man selling chestnuts; and right away at the other end of the curve, Angus could see a dim blue policeman walking slowly.

The little car shot up to the right house like a bullet, and shot out its owner like a bombshell. He

was immediately inquiring of a tall commissionaire, and a short porter, whether anybody or anything had been seeking his apartments. He was assured that nobody and nothing had passed these officials since his last inquiries; whereupon he and the slightly bewildered Angus were shot up in the lift like a rocket, till they reached the top floor.

"Just come in for a minute," said the breathless Smythe. "I want to show you those Welkin letters. Then you might run round the corner and fetch your friend." He pressed a button concealed in the wall, and the door opened of itself.

It opened on a long, commodious anteroom, of which the only arresting features, ordinarily speaking, were the rows of all half-human mechanical figures that stood up on both sides like tailors' dummies. Between the two rows of these domestic dummies lay a white, tattered scrap of paper scrawled with red ink; and the agile inventor had snatched it up almost as soon as the door flew open. He handed it to Angus without a word. The red ink on it actually was not dry, and the message ran, "If you have been to see her today, I shall kill you."

There was a short silence, and then Isidore Smythe said quietly, "Would you like a little drink? I rather feel as if I should."

"Thank you; I should like a little Flambeau," said Angus, gloomily. "This business seems to me to be getting rather grave. I'm going round at once to fetch him."

"Right you are," said the other with admirable cheerfulness. "Bring him here as quick as you can."

Six steps down from Smythe's landing the porter was doing something with a pail. Angus stopped to extract a promise, fortified with a prospective bribe, that he would remain in that place until his return with the detective, and would keep count of any kind of stranger coming up those stairs. Dashing down to the front hall he then laid similar charges of vigilance on the commissionaire at the front door, from whom he learned the simplifying circumstance that there was no back door. Not content with this, he captured the floating policeman and induced him to stand opposite the entrance and watch it; and finally paused an instant for a pennyworth of chestnuts, and with the promise of a sovereign nailed the chestnut man to his post.

He then walked away smartly, with a last look at the besieged tower.

"I've made a ring round that room, anyhow," he said. "They can't all four of them be Mr. Welkin's accomplices."

Lucknow Mansions were, so to speak, on a lower platform of that hill of houses, of which Himalaya Mansions might be called the peak. Flambeau, who was a friend of Angus, received him in a room behind his office, of which the ornaments were sabres, Eastern curiosities, savage cooking-pots, a plumpy Persian cat, and a small dusty-looking Roman Catholic priest, who looked particularly out of place.

"This is my friend Father Brown," said Flambeau. "I've often wanted you to meet him. Splendid weather, this; a little cold for Southerners like me."

"Yes, I think it will keep clear," said Angus.

"No," said the priest quietly, "it has begun to snow."

"Well," said Angus heavily, "I'm afraid I've come on business, and rather jumpy business at that. The fact is, Flambeau, within a stone's throw of your house is a fellow who badly wants your help: he's perpetually being haunted and threatened by an invisible enemy—a scoundrel whom nobody has even seen." As Angus proceeded to tell the whole tale of Smythe and Welkin, beginning with Laura's story, and going on with his own, Flambeau rose and said:

"If you don't mind I think you had better tell me the rest on the nearest road to this man's house. It strikes me, somehow, that there is no time to be lost."

"Delighted," said Angus, "though he's safe enough for the present, for I have set four men to watch the only hole to his burrow."

They turned out into the street, the small priest rolling after them like a small dog. He merely said, in a cheerful way, like one making conversation, "How quick the snow gets thick on the ground."

As they threaded the steep side streets already powdered with silver, Angus finished his story; and by the time they reached the towering flats, he had leisure to turn his attention to the four sentinels. The chestnut seller, both before and after receiving a sovereign, swore stubbornly that he had watched the door and seen no visitor enter. The policeman was even more emphatic. He said he had had experience of crooks of all kinds, in top hats and in rags; he wasn't so green as to expect suspicious characters to look suspicious; he looked out

for anybody, and there had been nobody. And when all three men gathered round the commissionaire, who still stood smiling astride of the porch, the verdict was more final still.

"I've got a right to ask any man, duke or dustman, what he wants in these flats," said the giant, "and I'll swear there's been nobody to ask since this gentleman went away."

The unimportant Father Brown, who stood back, looking modestly at the pavement, here ventured to say meekly, "Has nobody been up and downstairs, then, since the snow began to fall? It began while we were all round at Flambeau's."

"Nobody's been in here, sir, you can take it from me," said the official with beaming authority.

"Then I wonder what that is?" said the priest, and stared at the ground blankly like a fish.

The others all looked down also; and Flambeau used a fierce exclamation. For it was unquestionably true that down the middle of the entrance ran a stringy pattern of grey footprints stamped upon the white snow.

"God?" cried Angus involuntarily, "the Invisible Man!"

Without another word he turned and dashed up the stairs, with Flambeau following; but Father Brown still stood looking about him in the snow-clad street as if he had lost interest in his quarry.

Flambeau was plainly in a mood to break down the door with his big shoulder; but the Scotsman, with more reason, fumbled about on the frame of the door till he found the invisible button; and the door swung slowly open.

In the middle of the room, exactly where the paper with the red ink had lain, there lay something that looked very like red ink spilt out of its bottle. But it was not red ink.

With a French combination of reason and violence Flambeau simply said "Murder!" and, plunging into the flat, had explored every corner and cupboard of it in five minutes. But if he expected to find a corpse he found none. Isidore Smythe was not simply in the place, either dead or alive. After the most tearing search the two men met each other in the outer hall, with streaming faces and staring eyes. "My friend," said Flambeau, talking French in his excitement, "not only is your murderer invisible, but he makes invisible also the murdered man."

Angus gravely said, "The poor fellow has evaporated like a cloud and left a red streak on the floor. The tale does not belong to this world."

"There is only one thing to be done," said Flambeau, "whether it belongs to this world or the other, I must go down and talk to my friend."

They descended, passing the man with the pail, who again asseverated that he had let no intruder pass, down to the commissionaire and the hovering chestnut man, who rigidly reasserted their own watchfulness. But when Angus looked round for his fourth confirmation he could not see it, and called out with some nervousness, "Where is the policeman?"

"I beg your pardon," said Father Brown; "that is my fault. I just sent him down the road to investigate something—that I thought worth investigating."

"Well, we want him back pretty soon," said Angus abruptly, "for the wretched man upstairs has not only been murdered, but wiped out."

"How?" asked the priest.

"Father," said Flambeau, after a pause, "upon my soul I believe it is more in your department than mine. No friend or foe has entered the house, but Smythe is gone, as if stolen by the fairies. If that is not supernatural, I—"

As he spoke they were all checked by an unusual sight; the big blue policeman came round the corner, running. He came straight up to Father Brown.

"You're right, sir," he panted, "they've just found poor Mr. Smythe's body in the canal down below."

Angus put his hand wildly to his head. "Did he run down and drown himself?" he asked.

"He never came down, I'll swear," said the constable, "and he wasn't drowned either, for he died of a great stab over the heart."

"And yet you saw no one enter?" said Flambeau in a grave voice.

"Let us walk down the road a little," said the priest.

As they reached the other end of the road he observed abruptly, "Stupid of me! I forgot to ask the policeman something. I wonder if they found a light brown sack."

"Why a light brown sack?" asked Angus.

"Because if it was any other coloured sack, the case must begin over again," said Father Brown; "but if it was a light brown sack, why, the case is finished."

"I am pleased to hear it," said Angus with hearty irony. "It hasn't begun, so far as I am concerned."

"You must tell us all about it," said Flambeau with a simplicity, like a child.

Unconsciously they were walking with quickening steps down the long sweep of road, Father Brown leading briskly, though in silence. At last he said with an almost touching vagueness, "Well, I'm afraid you'll think it so prosy. We always begin at the abstract end of things, and you can't begin this story anywhere else.

"Have you ever noticed this—that people never answer what you say? They answer what you mean—or what they think you mean. Suppose one lady says to another in a country house, 'Is anybody staying with you?' the lady doesn't answer, 'Yes; the butler, the three footmen, the parlour-maid, and so on,' though the parlour-maid may be in the room, or the butler behind her chair. She says, 'There is *nobody* staying with us,' meaning nobody of the sort you mean. But suppose a doctor inquiring into an epidemic asks, 'Who is staying in the house?' then the lady will remember the butler, parlour-maid, and the rest. All language is used like that; you never get a question answered literally, even when you get it answered truly. When those four quite honest men said that no man had gone into the Mansions, they did not really mean that *no man* had gone into them. They meant no man whom they could suspect of being your man. A man did go into the house, and did come out of it but they never noticed him."

"An invisible man?" inquired Angus raising his red eyebrows.

"A mentally invisible man," said Father Brown. A minute or two after, he resumed in the same

unassuming voice, like a man thinking his way. "Of course, you can't think of such a man until you do think of him. That's where his cleverness comes in. But I came to think of him through two or three little things in the tale Mr. Angus told us. First there was the fact that this Welkin went for long walks. And then there was the vast lot of stamp paper on the window. And then, most of all, there were the two things the young lady said—things that couldn't be true. Don't get annoyed," he added hastily noting a sudden movement of the Scotsman's head; "she thought they were true all right, but they couldn't be true. A person *can't* be quite alone in a street a second before she receives a letter. She can't be quite alone in a street when she starts reading a letter just received. There must be somebody pretty near her; he must be mentally invisible."

"Why must there be somebody near her?" asked Angus.

"Because," said Father Brown, "barring carrier-pigeons, somebody must have brought her the letter."

"Do you really mean to say," asked Flambeau, "that Welkin carried his rival's letters to this lady?"

"Yes," said the priest. "Welkin carried his rival's letters to his lady. You see, he had to."

"Oh, I can't stand much more of this," exploded Flambeau. "Who is this fellow? What does he look like? What is the usual get-up of a mentally invisible man?"

"He is dressed rather handsomely in red, blue and gold," replied the priest promptly with precision, "and in this striking, and even showy, costume he entered

Himalaya Mansions under eight human eyes: he killed Smythe in cold blood, and came down into the street again carrying the dead body in his arms—"

"Reverend sir," cried Angus, standing still, "are you raving mad, or am I?"

"You are not mad," said Father Brown, "only a little unobservant. You have not noticed such a man as this, for example."

He took three quick strides forward, and put his hand on the shoulder of an ordinary passing postman who had bustled by them unnoticed under the shade of the trees.

"Nobody ever notices postmen somehow," he said thoughtfully; "yet they have passions like other men, and even carry large bags where a small corpse can be stowed quite easily."

The postman, instead of turning naturally, had ducked and tumbled against the garden fence. He was a lean fair-bearded man of very ordinary appearance, but as he turned an alarmed face over his shoulder, all three men were fixed with an almost fiendish squint.

Flambeau went back to his sabres, purple rugs and Persian cat, having many things to attend to. John Turnbull Angus went back to the lady at the shop. But Father Brown walked those snow-covered hills under the stars for many hours with a murderer, and what they said to each other will never be known.

THE GOOD SAMARITANS

ALFRED EDGAR COPPARD

Godley and Tollright were at loggerheads again, and when they were at loggerheads the firmament caved in and hell yawned wide. Both were in the middle fifties, but while Ambrose Godley was short and dark, Hippisley Tollright was tall and fair; thus, as a couple, they were admirably balanced although physically so diverse. These two spoilt bachelors were dilettanti in the most beautiful sense of that word; that is to say, each lived in chambers, each had more income than he could usefully use, either was generous, and neither was wise. They went to concerts together, to art exhibitions together, in fact to every manifestation of culture that the metropolis could provide, they ministered by their presence and if need be by their money. They wandered in search of the picturesque; when found, it made them blush with emotion. And yet in his secret heart Godley had a contempt amounting almost to nausea for Tollright's notions of holy beauty, while Tollright in similar secrecy bewailed Godley's infallible selection of the wrong things.

The ground of their present quarrel was the unhappy plight of a young man, by name Basil Clouting, who had been educated at Rugby. Now both Godley and Tollright had learnt the ways of the world at that very seminary. It was there that the joys of youth had been shared by them, and attachments formed that could never

be forgone. Both Godley and Tollright felt the pull of that mystical desire to *do* something for a most deserving young man. It appeared that he was married, quite recently married. Clouting had no position, no income, nothing but prospects, while his wife.....by name Julietta, daughter of a defunct Italian nobleman,.....was dependent upon Basil even for her prospects.

The two friends conferred as to the best means of putting the young fellow on his feet. It was agreed between them that Godley should speak to the director of a company he was interested in and procure for Clouting some sort of position in the business world. By the malice of fortune Tollright almost at once met a director of a company he was interested in, who was in want of a clerk. Not a very good position, possibly not quite worthy of a Clouting who had been to Rugby, but still it was a beginning, it meant an income sufficient to keep him out of the gutter, it would serve to keep some sort of a roof over the heads of Basil and Julietta. Without notifying Godley, Tollright clinched the matter there and then, and in a couple of days Basil Clouting was installed in the offices of a firm devoted to the production of cutlery. Unhappily, Godley's efforts too met with quick success, but on referring to Clouting he found that the protege was already, through the exertions of Tollright, engaged to another company. This put Godley into a mood which, on due reflection, raged into fury. Off he went to Tollright and protested:

"Here I've been cap in hand to that humbug Rachmanovich.....by no means a friend of mine.....begging a job for this Clouting and all the time, without a word

to me, you had popped in your infernal nose and hooked him into a job that's a disgrace, a disgrace!"

"A disgrace?"

"For a person of any breeding.....isn't it? Cooped up in an office like a jackanapes from morning to night for two pounds a week! Good God, Tollright, have you no imagination? And what's more, I've had to go and tell Rachmanovich that his job's not wanted now. I looked a pretty fool. I don't like looking a fool. I don't like throwing a good friendly offer back in a friend's face. When I am asked to interest myself in a person, I don't want anybody else to come butting in with a clout over the head like this. It was hard enough work to get the offer.....it seems impossible nowadays to get anyone to move at all in anything....."

"But Ambrose....."

"It's like walking in the bottomless pit. There's no limit, no limit at all, to the inertia of these busybodies nowadays. But I do my best, I go and grovel at the feet of Rachmanovich.....and this is how I am served!"

"But Ambrose, what are you kicking up all this dust for? I've got the boy a job, haven't I? If Rachmanovich's job is open, let the poor boy take it. By all means. It is certainly a much better position. I'll explain matters to the cutlery company."

"Bah!" snarled Godley "For what do you take me? Certainly not! You've made a hash of it all. I mean to say, you've made a bed for Clouting and now the fellow must lie on it. I won't stir another inch, I tell you. I won't lift a finger."

Tollright was greatly perturbed by his friend's seeming

heartlessness. It looked as though Godley was determined that the innocent Clouting should suffer through Tollright's well-meaning but miswrought energy. They quarrelled, they swore, they quite uncontrollably insulted each other, and finally they parted—finally!

Well, nothing could be more deadly than a rebuff to a good action, and so, although both their intentions had been kindly, the gulf was unbridgeable. Gone the good old days. They neither met nor communicated. Concerts, shows and other occasions were avoided by both, and their entire dissolution might have been completed had it not been for an incident, or an accident rather, which posed the problem of Clouting for them once again. It appears that, despite his obvious and undoubted gifts, Clouting was not quite at home in the offices of the cutlery company. His sense of decorum was undeveloped, his attitude of inferiority not very well marked. One day he was hurriedly summoned from the office below to attend a director in his room upstairs. Pulling out a handkerchief on his way up, he unluckily allowed a coin to slip from his pocket. It went rolling down the stairs. The stairs were dark, they were often in use by strangers; the coin was the only one at that time in the possession of Mr. Clouting, and he was not in the least inclined to relinquish the precious piece of property. This entailed a somewhat protracted search. At length a fellow clerk came and peered up the stairs.

“I say, the director is yelling for you!”

“All right, I’ve just dropped a shilling,” Clouting answered.

“But he’s in a hurry.....don’t you understand!”

"All right. All right."

"He's got a train to catch!"

"Let him catch it.....I've got to find my bob."

Now all this was overheard by the director, who, enraged by the delay, had come out glowering to the head of the stairs.

"Clouting! Clouting!" he roared.

"I'm coming," said the imperturbable one, without advancing a single step.

"You're going. Throw him Out!" yelled the director. And, metaphorically speaking, they did so.

It was with some indignation that young Clouting informed his benefactor of this dire conclusion to his appointment. Tollright was sympathetic. He reflected that he would again have to ask Godley to appeal to Rachmanovich on Clouting's behalf, and to do him justice, he rather welcomed the opening it gave him to approach his old friend once more. But he realised it was no good doing a thing by halves: Amby was a queer old dog, so he wrote him a letter of explanation and humble apology.

There was no immediate reply, indeed it was three days before he got a rather formal invitation to go to lunch at Godley's. It sounded slightly grudging, and Tollright went off to his old friend in an apprehensive state of mind.

"I can only give you," announced Godley, greeting him frigidly, "a little cold mutton for lunch."

"But cold mutton is charming," said the affable Tollright. "Do you have many varieties?"

"As many as I find necessary for a sheep," retorted Godley.

Well, that was not too nice to begin with, but the

cold mutton was nicer ; it seemed to propitiate Godley, and over the cigars he blew out a cloud, posed the cigar in his right hand for attentive scrutiny, and suddenly said :
 “ Well, Hippisley ? ”

And Tollright said : “ Well.” He sat up and added :
 “ You got my letter ? ”

“ I got ”.....Godley was grim and succinct.....“ your mass of verbiage.”

That nettled Tollright straightaway, and he said hotly that the letter was easy enough to understand provided a little goodwill was imported into its perusal.

“ Understand ! No ! ” shouted Godley. “ As for the goodwill, well, it might have been written by a Chinese youth to a person of bad quality ! ”

“ It was intended,” Tollright replied, “ to be an apology though I must say, now, that I hardly know what for.”

“ D’ye call that an apology ! Good heavens, man ! It’s an argument, it’s a justification of what can’t possibly be justified. You know that well enough.”

“ I said I was sorry.”

“ I should think you jolly well ought to be ! ”

“ Well, I am, ain’t I ? Do you expect me to abase myself ? ”

“ Don’t be a noodle.”

“ And crawl round in sackcloth and ashes ? ”

“ Nothing of the kind. I’m not asking that, and I don’t want it.”

“ Then what *are* you asking ? ”

Godley threw up his arms with the despairing air of a man who knows everything, everything, and is amazed at the obtuseness of others :

"I'm asking you, my good chap, to behave as a gentleman.....that's all."

"Well, how? Just tell me how, Ambrose. Be good enough to inform me, will you? I've done wrong.....I know it, I know!.....I lose my temper and get hot and haughty, I admit that. Then I write you a letter of apology, say I'm sorry.....and I am.....what more can I do?"

"O," groaned Godley, "if you were a gentleman you'd *know*!"

"If you were a friend, you'd *tell* me."

"I reckon I *am* your friend, or I thought I was; as good a friend as *you'll* ever find."

"Certainly," cried Tollright with great heartiness. "And very well then. It's settled, it's all over, it's finished, it's done with! Hooray! Ambrose, what the deuce have we been quarrelling about?"

"I've not quarrelled. Don't go making that mistake. It's not me."

"Pooh, now, pooh! You said I was no gentleman."

"You said I was no friend."

"Well, once for all, Ambrose, *are* you?"

Godley gazed sternly at his friend. "Look here. I'm the culprit, I'm the sinner, I'm the low-class black-guard.....I know all that.....but I'm dashed if I'm going to be gored and maimed....."

"O no, no, no, no!"

"I've got a temper, I own to that, I was *born* with a temper....."

"You've a right to it then," said his friend *placably*.

"Yes, and I'll do as I damn well please with it, you

see! So now then Hippisley, out with it.....friend or foe?"

Tollright's face broke into a radiant smile. "Ah, go on with you! Have it your own way, you always do! Say no more about it." And he got up, shook Ambrose warmly by the hand, beamed at him, and murmured: "You old dog, you!" Then, settling himself down again, he said: "Now we can discuss what's to be done about poor Basil."

"Done!" grunted Godley. "I can do nothing, Hippisley. You've taken the matter out of my hands, it is done, it's finished. That's me!"

"O gracious!" cried the confounded Tollright. "Don't let's begin all over again.....how have I taken him out of your hands, Ambrose, how have I?"

"How! How!"

"Yes, how?"

"O damnation, have I got to parse and analyse it for you! When analysing a thing, anything at all, it is necessary.....is it not, Hippisley?.....to distinguish."

"To distinguish?" echoed Tollright.

"Yes, between one thing and another, isn't it?"

"O, I agree with you, I agree.....but what does it *mean*?"

"Let me tell you, I will tell you what it means....."

"No, but I want to know....."

"Will you let me tell you! Will you let me tell you!"

"O, damn it, go on!"

"Bah! What is the use of talking to you, Hippisley! But listen; I've been to see Rachmanovich again....."

"O, you have! already!"

"Of course. And the job's filled now, it's taken, it's gone. Clouting ought to have snapped it when it was offered."

"Yes, yes," Tollright mournfully conceded; "and he'd have been all right by now."

"Not he. I don't think so. He's an idiot, I could see that at a glance. One of these helpless fools who want pushing and pushing and pushing.....can't do a thing for themselves. I tell you, Hippisley, there is no limit to the sheer nullity of being with which this world is peopled. He's well educated, of course, but that isn't any use to him. What's the good of education.....the standards are all false?"

"Not false, Ambrose; I wouldn't say that!"

"Well, absurd then."

"Not absurd, either!"

"Well, they're no use, no use at all."

"Ah, that doesn't matter a bit, Ambrose, not one bit."

"But I tell you," said Godley, "what I *will* do. I will see if anything can be done for him, if you leave it entirely to *me* this time. Now, can I rely on you, Hippisley?"

Tollright promised to leave the matter utterly, entirely and absolutely in the hands of his friend, and so, in due course, they genially parted.

After Tollright had gone, Godley lit a second cigar and tramped about his room puffing silent salvoes of smoke, ruminating, sniffing, smiling. In the end he only sat down and wrote out a cheque for twenty pounds payable to Basil Clouting, Esquire. From the way he sighed and shrugged on addressing the envelope, it could be

gathered that he feared this young man was in a lamentable case.

And yet it was, naturally, disconcerting for him to learn a few days later that the irresponsible Tollright had also sent a cheque, and for more than twice that amountfor fifty pounds in fact.

Godley immediately despatched a letter to his friend, beginning with : "Dear Tollright, I am astounded beyond measure by this latest example of your intolerable interference."

To which Tollright replied with the briefest of notes : "Sir, you may go to the devil. P.S.....This is final and for ever."

Alas ! In all probability this was merely because young Clouting.....who was *not* married, who knew *no* Julietta, who proved indeed to be an altogether undesirable young ruffian.....had cashed both cheques and bolted clean away to the Azores.

THE DOLL'S HOUSE

KATHERINE MANSFIELD

When dear old Mrs. Hay went back to town after staying with the Burnells she sent the children a doll's house. It was so big that the carter and Pat carried it into the courtyard, and there it stayed, propped up on two wooden boxes beside the feed-room door. No harm could come to it ; it was summer. And perhaps the smell of paint would have gone off by the time it had to be taken in. For, really, the smell of paint coming from that doll's house ('Sweet of old Mrs. Hay of course ; most sweet and generous !')—but the smell of paint was quite enough to make anyone seriously ill, in Aunt Beryl's opinion.

There stood the Doll's house, a dark, oily, spinach green, picked out with bright yellow. It's two solid little chimneys, glued on to the roof, were painted red and white and the door, gleaming with yellow varnish, was like a little slab of toffee. Four windows, real windows, were divided into panes by a broad streak of green. There was actually a tiny porch, too, painted yellow, with big lumps of congealed paint hanging along the edge.

But perfect, perfect little house ! Who could possibly mind the smell. It was part of the joy, part of the newness.

"Open it quickly, someone !"

The hook at the side was stuck fast. Pat prised it open with his penknife, and the whole house front swung back, and—there you were, gazing at one and the same

moment into the drawing-room and dining-room, the kitchen and two bedrooms. That is the way for a house to open ! Why don't all houses open like that ? How much more exciting than peering through the slit of a door into a mean little hall with a hatstand and two umbrellas ! That is— isn't it ?—what you long to know about a house when you put your hand on the knocker.

“ O—oh ! ” The Burnell children sounded as though they were in despair. It was too marvellous ; it was too much for them. They had never seen anything like it in their lives. All the rooms were papered. There were pictures on the walls, painted on the paper, with gold frames complete. Red carpet covered all the floors except the kitchen ; red plush chairs in the drawing-room, green in the dining-room ; tables, beds with real bedclothes, a cradle, a stove, a dresser with tiny plates and one big jug. But what Kezia liked more than anything, what she liked frightfully, was the lamp. It stood in the middle of the dining-room table, an exquisite little lamp with a white globe. It was even filled all ready for lighting, though, of course, you couldn't light it. But there was something inside that looked like oil and moved when you shook it.

The father and mother dolls, who sprawled very stiff as though they had fainted in the drawing-room, and their two little children asleep upstairs, were really too big for the doll's house. But the lamp was perfect. It seemed to smile at Kezia, to say, “ I live here.” The lamp was real.

The Burnell children could hardly walk to school fast enough the next morning. They burned to tell everybody, to describe, to—well—to boast about their doll's house before the school-bell rang.

"I'm to tell," said Isabel, "because I'm the eldest. And you two can join in after. But I'm to tell first."

There was nothing to answer. Isabel was bossy, but she was always right, and Lottie and Kezia knew too well the powers that went with being eldest. They brushed through the thick buttercups at the road edge and said nothing.

"And I'm to choose who's to come and see it first. Mother said I might."

For it had been arranged that while the doll's house stood in the courtyard they might ask the girls at school, two at a time, to come and look. Not to stay to tea, of course, or to come trapesing through the house. But just to stand quietly in the courtyard while Isabel pointed out the beauties, and Lottie and Kezia looked pleased.....

But hurry as they might, by the time they had reached the barred palings of the boy's playground, the bell had begun to jangle. They only just had time to whip off their hats and fall into line before the roll was called. Never mind. Isabel tried to make up for it by looking very important and mysterious and by whispering behind her hand to the girls near her, "Got something to tell you at playtime."

Playtime came and Isabel was surrounded. The girls of her class nearly fought to put their arms round her, to walk away with her, to beam flatteringly, to be her special friend. She held quite a court under the huge pine trees at the side of the playground. Nudging, giggling together, the little girls pressed up close. And the only two who stayed outside the ring were the two who were

always outside, the little Kelveys. They knew better than to come anywhere near the Burnells.

For the fact was, the school the Burnell children went to was not at all the kind of place their parents would have chosen if there had been any choice. But there was none. It was the only school for miles. And the consequence was, all the children of the neighbourhood, the Judge's little girls, the doctor's daughters, the storekeeper's children, the milkman's, were forced to mix together. Not to speak of there being an equal number of rude, rough little boys as well. But the line had to be drawn somewhere. It was drawn at the Kelveys. Many of the children, including the Burnells, were not allowed even to speak to them. They walked past the Kelveys with their heads in the air, and as they set the fashion in all matters of behaviour, the Kelveys were shunned by everybody. Even the teacher had a special voice for them, and a special smile for the other children when Lil Kelvey came up to her desk with a bunch of dreadfully common-looking flowers.

They were daughters of a spry, hardworking little washerwoman, who went about from house to house by the day. This was awful enough. But where was Mr. Kelvey? Nobody knew for certain. But everybody said he was in prison. So they were the daughters of a washerwoman and a gaolbird. Very nice company for other people's children! And they looked it. Why Mrs. Kelvey made them so conspicuous was hard to understand. The truth was they were dressed in "bits" given to her by the people for whom she worked. Lil was a stout, plain child, with big freckles. And her little sister, our Else,

was a tiny wishbone of a child, with cropped hair and enormous solemn eyes—a little white owl. Nobody had ever seen her smile ; she scarcely ever spoke. She went through life holding on to Lil, with a piece of Lil's skirt screwed up in her hand. Where Lil went, our Else followed. In the playground, on the road going to and from school, there was Lil marching in front and our Else holding on behind. Only when she wanted anything or when she was out of breath, our Else gave Lil a tug, and Lil stopped and turned round. The Kelyeys never failed to understand each other.

Now they hovered at the edge ; you couldn't stop them listening. When the little girls turned round and sneered, Lil as usual gave her silly shamefaced smile, but our Else only looked.

And Isabel's voice, so very proud, went on telling. The carpet made a great sensation, but so did the beds with real bedclothes, and the stove with an oven door.

When she finished Kezia broke in. " You've forgotten the lamp, Isabel."

" Oh, yes," said Isabel, " and there's a teeny little lamp all made of yellow glass, with a white globe that stands on the dining-room table. You couldn't tell it from a real one."

" The lamp's best of all," cried Kezia. She thought Isabel wasn't making half enough of the little lamp. But nobody paid any attention. Isabel was choosing the two who were to come back with them that afternoon and see it. She chose Emmie Cole and Lena Logan. But when the others knew they were all to have a chance, they couldn't be nice enough to Isabel. One by one they

put their arms round Isabel's waist and walked her off. They had something to whisper to her, a secret. "Isabel's *my* friend."

Only the little Kelveys moved away forgotten ; there was nothing more for them to hear.

Days passed, and as more children saw the doll's house, the fame of it spread. It became the one subject, the rage. The one question was, "Have you seen Burnell's doll's house ? Oh, ain't it lovely !" "Haven't you seen it ? Oh, I say !"

Even the dinner hour was given up to talking about it. The little girls sat under the pines eating their thick mutton sandwiches and big slabs of johnny cake spread with butter. While always, as near as they could get, sat the Kelveys, our Else holding on to Lil, listening too, while they chewed their jam sandwiches out of a newspaper.

"Mother," said Kezia, "can't I ask the Kelveys just once ?"

"Certainly not Kezia."

"But why not ?"

"Run away, Kezia ; you know quite well why not."

At last everybody had seen it except them. On that day the subject rather flagged. It was the dinner hour. The children stood together under the pine trees, and suddenly, as they looked at the Kelveys eating out of their paper, always by themselves, always listening, they wanted to be horrid to them. Emmie Cole started the whisper.

"Lil Kelvey's going to be a servant when she grows up."

“O—oh, how awful!” said Isabel Burnell, and she made eyes at Emmie.

Emmie swallowed in a very meaning way and nodded to Isabel as she’d seen her mother do on those occasions.

“It’s true—it’s true—it’s true,” she said.

Then Lena Logan’s little eye snapped. “Shall I ask her?” she whispered.

“Bet you don’t” said Jessie May.

“Pooh, I’m not frightened,” said Lena.

Suddenly she gave a little squeal and danced in front of the other girls. “Watch! Watch me! Watch me now!” said Lena. And sliding, gliding, dragging one foot, giggling behind her hand, Lena went over to the Kelveys.

Lil looked up from her dinner. She wrapped the rest quickly away. Our Else stopped chewing. What was coming now?

“Is it true you’re going to be a servant when you grow up, Lil Kelvey?” shrilled Lena.

Dead silence. But instead of answering, Lil only gave her silly, shamefaced smile. She didn’t seem to mind the question at all. What a sell for Lena! The girls began to titter.

Lena couldn’t stand that. She put her hands on her hips; she shot forward. “Yah, yer father’s in prison!” she hissed, spitefully.

This was such a marvellous thing to have said that the little girls rushed away in a body, deeply, /deeply excited, wild with joy. Someone found a long rope, and they began skipping. And never did they skip so high, run in and out so fast, or do such daring things as on that morning.

In the afternoon Pat called for the Burnell children with the buggy and they drove home. There were visitors. Isabel and Lottie, who liked visitors, went upstairs to change their pinafores. But Kezia thieved out at the back. Nobody was about ; she began to swing on the big white gates of the courtyard. Presently, looking along the road, she saw two little dots. They grew bigger, they were coming towards her. Now she could see that one was in front and one close behind. Now she could see that they were the Kelveys. Kezia stopped swinging. She slipped off the gate as if she was going to run away. Then she hesitated. The Kelveys came nearer, and beside them walked their shadows, very long, stretching right across the road with their heads in the buttercups. Kezia clambered back on the gate ; she had made up her mind ; she swung out.

"Hullo," she said to the passing Kelveys.

They were so astounded that they stopped.

Lil gave her silly smile. Our Else stared.

"You can come and see our doll's house if you want to," said Kezia, and she dragged one toe on the ground. But at that Lil turned red and shook her head quickly.

"Why not?" asked Kezia.

Lil gasped, then she said, "Your ma told our ma you wasn't to speak to us."

"Oh, well," said Kezia. She didn't know what to reply. "It doesn't matter. You can come and see our doll's house all the same. Come on. Nobody's looking."

But Lil shook her head still harder.

"Don't you want to?" asked Kezia.

Suddenly there was a twitch, a tug at Lil's skirt.

She turned round. Our Else was looking at her with big imploring eyes ; she was frowning ; she wanted to go. For a moment Lil looked at our Else very doubtfully. But then our Else twitched her skirt again. She started forward. Kezia led the way. Like two little stray cats they followed across the courtyard to where the doll's house stood.

"There it is," said Kezia.

There was a pause. Lil breathed loudly, almost snorted ; our Else was still as stone.

"I'll open it for you," said Kezia kindly. She undid the hook and they looked inside.

"There's the drawing-room and the dining-room, and that's the....."

"Kezia !"

Oh, what a start they gave !

"Kezia !"

It was Aunt Beryl's voice. They turned round. At the back door stood Aunt Beryl, staring as if she couldn't believe what she saw.

"How dare you ask the little Kelveys into the courtyard?" said her cold, furious voice. "You know as well as I do, you're not allowed to talk to them. Run away, children, run away at once. And don't come back again," said Aunt Beryl. And she stepped into the yard and shooed them out as if they were chickens.

"Off you go immediately !" she called, cold and proud,

They did not need telling twice. Burning with shame, shrinking together, somehow they crossed the big courtyard and squeezed through the white gate.

"Wicked, disobedient little girl!" said Aunt Beryl bitterly to Kezia.

When the Kelveys were well out of sight of Burnells, they sat down to rest on a big red drainpipe by the side of the road. Lil's cheeks were still burning. Dreamily they looked over the hay paddocks, past the creek, to the group of wattles where Logan's cows stood waiting to be milked. What were their thoughts?

Presently our Else nudged up close to her sister. But now she had forgotten the cross lady. She put out a finger and stroked her sister's hat; she smiled her rare smile.

"I seen the little lamp," she said softly.
Then both were silent once more.

THE FORTUNE-TELLER

KAREL CAPEK

Everybody who knows anything about the subject will realize that this episode could not have happened in Czechoslovakia, or in France, or in Germany, for in all these countries, as you are aware, judges are bound to try offenders and to sentence them in accordance with the letter of the law and not in accordance with their shrewd commonsense and the dictates of their consciences. And the fact that in this story there is a judge who, in passing sentence, was guided not by the statute-book but by sound commonsense, is due to the circumstance that the incident which I am about to relate could have happened nowhere else than in England; in fact, it happened in London, or to be more precise, in Kensington; no, wait a bit, it was in Brompton or Bayswater.....anyway somewhere thereabouts. The judge was, as a matter of fact, a magistrate, and his name was Mr. Kelly, J.P. Also there was a lady, and her name was plain Myers. Mrs Edith Myers.

Well, I must tell you that this lady, who was otherwise a respectable person, came under the notice of Detective Inspector MacLeary.

"My dear," said MacLeary to his wife one evening, "I can't get that Mrs. Myers out of my head. What I'd like to know is, how the woman makes her living. Just fancy, here we are in the month of February and she's sent her servant for asparagus. And I've discovered that she has between twelve and twenty visitors everyday, and they vary from charwomen to duchesses. I know,

darling, you'll say she's probably a fortune-teller. Very likely, but that can only be a blind for something else, say, the white slave traffic or espionage. Look here, I'd rather like to get to the bottom of it."

"All right, Bob," said the excellent Mrs. MacLeary, "you leave it to me."

And so it came about that on the following day, Mrs. MacLeary, of course without her wedding ring, but on the other hand very girlishly dressed, with a scared look on her baby face, rang at Mrs. Myers's door in Bayswater or possibly Marylebone. She had to wait quite a while before Mrs. Myers received her.

"Sit down, my dear," said the old lady, when she had very thoroughly inspected her shy visitor. "What can I do for you?"

"I.....I.....I....." stammered Mrs. MacLeary. "I'd like.....It's my twentieth birthday tomorrow.....I'm awfully anxious to know about my future."

"But, Miss.....er, what name, please?" quoth Mrs. Myers, and seized a pack of cards which she began to shuffle energetically.

"Jones," sighed Mrs. MacLeary.

"My dear Miss Jones," continued Mrs. Myers, "don't misunderstand me. I don't tell fortunes by cards, except, of course, just now and then, to oblige a friend, as every old woman does. Take the cards in your left hand and divide them into five heaps. That's right. Sometimes I read the cards as a pastime, but apart from that.....dear me!" she said, cutting the first heap. "Diamonds! That means money. And the knave of hearts. That's a nice hand."

“ Ah,” said Mrs. MacLeary, “ and what else ?”

“ Knave of diamonds,” proceeded Mrs. Myers, uncovering the second heap. “ Ten of spades, that’s a journey. But here !” she exclaimed. “ I see clubs. Clubs always mean worry, but there’s a queen of hearts at the bottom.”

“ What does that mean ?” asked Mrs. MacLeary, opening her eyes as wide as she could.

“ Diamonds again,” meditated Mrs. Myers over the third heap. “ My dear, there’s lots of money in store for you ! but I can’t tell yet whether you’re going on a long journey or whether it’s someone near and dear to you.”

“ I’ve got to go to Southampton to see my aunt,” remarked Mrs. MacLeary.

“ That must be the long journey,” said Mrs. Myers, cutting the fourth heap. “ Somebody’s going to get in your way, some elderly man.....”

“ I expect that’s my uncle !” exclaimed Mrs. MacLeary.

“ Well, here we’ve got something and no mistake,” declared Mrs. Myers over the fifth heap. “ My dear Miss Jones, this is the nicest hand I’ve ever seen. There’ll be a wedding before the year’s out ! a very, very rich young man is going to marry you.....he must be a millionaire or a business man, because he travels a lot ! but before you are united, you’ll have to overcome great obstacles ! there’s an elderly gentleman who’ll get in your way, but you must persevere. When you do get married you’ll move a long way off, most likely across the ocean. My fee’s a guinea, for the Christian mission to the poor negroes.”

“ I’m so grateful to you,” declared Mrs. MacLeary, taking one pound and one shilling out of her handbag,

"awfully grateful. Mrs. Myers, what would it cost without any of those worries?"

"The cards can't be bribed," said the old lady with dignity. "What is your uncle?"

"He's in the police," lied the young lady with an innocent face. "You know, the secret service."

"Oh!" said the old lady, and drew three cards out of the heap. "That's very nasty, very nasty. Tell him, my dear, that he's threatened by a great danger. He ought to come and see me, to find out more about it. There's lots of them from Scotland Yard come here and get me to read the cards for them, and they all tell me what they have on their minds. Yes, just you send him to me. You say he's on secret service work? Mr. Jones? Tell him I'll be expecting him. Good-bye, dear Miss Jones. Next please!"

"I don't like the look of this," said Mr. MacLeary, scratching his neck reflectively. "I don't like the look of this, Katie. That woman was too much interested in your late uncle. Besides that, her real name isn't Myers, but Meierhofer, and she hails from Lubeck. A damned German!" growled Mr. MacLeary. "I wonder how we can stop her little game? I wouldn't mind betting five to one that she worms things out of people that are no business of hers. I'll tell you what! I'll pass the word on to the bosses."

And Mr. MacLeary did, in good sooth, pass the word on to the bosses. Oddly enough, the bosses took a serious view of the matter, and so it came about that the worthy Mrs. Myers was summoned to appear before Mr. Kelly, J.P.

"Well, Mrs Myers," the magistrate said to her, "what's all this I hear about this fortune-telling of yours with cards?"

“Good gracious, your worship,” said the old lady, “I must do something for a living. At my age I can’t go on the music-halls and dance!”

“Hm,” said Mr. Kelly. “But the charge against you is that you don’t read the cards properly. My dear good lady, that’s as bad as if you were to give people slabs of clay when they ask for cakes of chocolate. In return for a fee of one guinea people are entitled to a correct prophecy. Look here now, what’s the good of your trying to prophesy when you don’t know how to?”

“It isn’t everyone who complains,” urged the old lady in her defence. “You see, I foretell the things they like. The pleasure they get out of it is worth a few shillings, your worship. And sometimes I’m right. ‘Mrs. Myers,’ said one lady to me, ‘nobody’s ever read the cards for me as well as you have and given me such good advice.’ She lives in St. John’s Wood and is getting a divorce from her husband.”

“Look here,” the magistrate cut her short. “We’ve got a witness against you. Mrs. MacLeary tell the court what happened.”

“Mrs. Myers told me from the cards,” began Mrs. MacLeary glibly, “that before the year was out I’d be married, that my future husband would be a rich young man and that I’d go with him across the ocean.....”

“Why across the ocean particularly?” inquired the magistrate.

“Because there was the nine of spades in the second heap! Mrs. Myers said that means journeys.”

“Rubbish!” growled the magistrate. “The nine of spades means hope. It’s the jack of spades that means

journeys, and when it turns up with the seven of diamonds, that means long journeys that are likely to lead to something worth while. Mrs. Myers, you can't bamboozle me. You prophesied to the witness here that before the year was out she'd marry a rich young man. But Mrs. MacLeary has been married for the last three years to Detective-Inspector MacLeary, and a fine fellow he is too. Mrs. Myers, how do you explain that absurdity?"

"My goodness me!" said the old lady placidly. "That does happen now and then. When this young person called on me she was all dressed up, but her left glove was torn. So that looked as if she wasn't too well off, but she wanted to make a good impression. Then she said she was twenty, but now it turns out she's twenty-five....."

"Twenty-four," Mrs. MacLeary burst forth.

"That's all the same. Well, she wanted to get married, what I mean to say, she made out to me she wasn't married. So I arranged a set of cards for her that'd mean a wedding and a rich husband. I thought that'd meet the case better than anything else."

"And what about the obstacles, the elderly gentleman and the journey across the ocean?" asked Mrs. MacLeary.

"That was to give you plenty for your money," said Mrs. Myers artlessly. "There's quite a lot has to be told for a guinea."

"Well, that's enough," said the magistrate. "Mrs. Myers, it's no use. The way you tell fortunes by cards is a fraud. Cards take some understanding. Of course, there are various ideas about it, but if my memory serves me, the nine of spades never means journeys. You'll pay a fine of fifty pounds, just the same as people who

adulterate food or sell worthless goods. There's a suspicion, too, Mrs. Myers, that you're engaged in espionage as well. But I don't expect you'll admit that."

"As true as I'm standing here....." exclaimed Mrs. Myers.

But Mr. Kelly interrupted her. "Well, we'll say no more about that. But as you're an alien without any proper means of subsistence, the authorities will make use of the powers vested in them and will have you deported. Good-bye, Mrs. Myers, and thank you, Mrs. MacLeary. I must say that this inaccurate fortune-telling is a disgraceful and unscrupulous business. Just bear that in mind, Mrs. Myers."

"What am I to do now?" sighed the old lady. "Just when I was beginning to get a good connexion together....."

About a year later Mr. Kelly met Detective-Inspector MacLeary.

"Fine weather," said the magistrate amiably. "By the way, how is Mrs. MacLeary?"

Mr. MacLeary looked very glum. "Well.....you know, Mr. Kelly," he said with a certain embarrassment, "Mrs. MacLeary.....well, the fact is.....she's left me."

"You don't say so," said the magistrate in astonishment, "such a nice young lady, too!"

"That's just it," growled Mr. MacLeary. "Some young whipper-snapper went crazy about her before I knew what was happening. He's a millionaire, or a business-man from Melbourne. I tried to stop her, but....." Mr. MacLeary made a helpless gesture with his hand, "a week ago they sailed together for Australia."

NOTES

1. EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809—1849).

Three Sundays in a Week

Biographical Sketch

Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston (America) on the 18th January, 1809. His parents were actors. His father deserted his mother. Poe, just two years old, was adopted by John Allan, a rich tobacco merchant. Poe had his first schooling in England. At seventeen he entered the University of Virginia (America) where he acquired a great knowledge of the classics, and also a taste for gambling. His growing extravagance led to a break with Allan.

A failure in life, Poe was, however, a great success as a writer. He was the pioneer of the detective story. For the background of his story, he chose death, desolation, fear of approaching calamity, and unrelieved horror. The story selected here offers a happy contrast to the horrible atmosphere we usually find in Poe, though it is not without its biting irony.

Poe died at Baltimore (America) on October 7, 1849.

Principal Works

The Cask of Amontillado; The Pit and the Pendulum; The Gold Bug; The Black Cat; The Fall of the House of Usher; The Purloined Letter; The Murders in the Rue Morgue.

Notes

Page

1 shaking my fist at him: threatening to strike him. A clenched fist is a sign of anger.

had half a mind to do: I was somewhat disposed to do.

blandest: most polite and gentle.

2 capital: excellent; first-rate.

Page

wouldn't it answer : would it not serve the purpose ; would it not be sufficient.

the plum : the best of the choicest thing.}

scapgrace : a graceless and reckless person.

if I die for it : even if I were to lose my life I will not change it.

3 **(had) a thick skull** : (was) stupid.

(had) a long purse : (was) wealthy.

a predominant whim of contradiction : he was very fond of contradicting others.

curmudgeon : a miserly or churlish fellow.

belles-lettres : studies of the purely literary kind.

the Muses : the nine goddesses, daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, who are inspirers of poetry, music, etc.

Horace : a famous ancient Roman lyric poet.

dudgeon : anger ; resentment.

the humanities : the branches of polite learning (as contrasted to sciences), especially the ancient classics like Latin and Greek.

set him off at a tangent : made him abruptly change his usual line of thought or conduct.

4 **a dog's existence** : a miserable and wretched life.

House of Correction : a reformatory or jail.

come-at-able : capable of being come at, *i.e.*, obtainable ; accessible.

5 **punctilious** : exact only in the outward forms of duty or conduct.

The spirit of his vows——a bond inviolable : He did not mind to change the real meaning or purpose of what he said so long as the outward or apparent meaning or form of his words was kept.

7 **You are out** : You are not quite in your senses.

a judgment upon you : a misfortune viewed as a sign of divine displeasure.

has us completely : has defeated us ; has gained advantage over us.

Exercises

1. Describe the character of Uncle Rumgudgeon.
2. Explain the humour contained in the story.
3. How do Kate and Robert manage to get round their uncle ?
4. Use the following :
half a mind ; die for it ; set off at a tangent ; the letter and the spirit.

2. CHARLES DICKENS (1812—1870)

The Story of the Goblins who Stole A Sexton

Biographical Sketch

Charles Dickens was born at Portsmouth in 1812. His childhood was spent in hunger and want. He was barely eleven when his father, John Dickens, was imprisoned for debt, and the burden of supporting the family fell upon his young shoulders. He did not feel depressed, but worked his way gradually to great fame and eminence.

Dickens did not attend any school or university. All his education he received in the streets of Chatham and London, where he acquired a first-hand knowledge of the poverty and wretchedness of the masses. It made him a champion of the cause of the poor and the oppressed, and a severe critic of hypocrisy, cruelty, and social injustice. No wonder that Dickens became the most popular novelist in his own country and in his own time. He is not a typical short story writer, though his Christmas stories, like the one selected here, had a great vogue.

Dickens was also an excellent actor. He gave readings from his own works. This told heavily on his health, and, combined with his unceasing activity in writing, hastened his end. He died in June, 1870, at the comparatively early age of fifty-eight.

Principal Works

Pickwick Papers ; Oliver Twist ; Great Expectations ; David Copperfield ; A Tale of Two Cities.

Notes

Page

- 10** **abbey** : building occupied by monks or nuns under an abbot or abbess.
sexton : a minor officer incharge of a church.
undertaker : one who manages funerals.
mute : a hired mourner.
devil-may-care : rollicking ; free from all care or anxiety.
crossgrained : perverse ; not easy to please.
- 11** **cheer** : food.
gall and wormwood : very bitter ; the phrase is always used as a whole.
sanctuary : a sacred place (of safe retreat).
- 12** **A Christmas Box** : instead of a box containing some Christmas presents, here is, in his opinion, a box (a grave) that might serve the purpose quite as well.
- 13** **in lieu of** : in place of.
ruff : a frill of several folds of linen or muslin, worn round the neck.
- 14** **Hollands** : a kind of grain wine made in and imported from Holland.
choristers : members, especially boys, of a band of singers performing musical parts of a church service.
- 15** **Wellingtons** : a kind of boots so called because first worn by the famous Duke of Wellington.
under favour : with your permission.
- 16** **overing** : leaping over.
- 17** **to fetch his breath** : to breathe normally again.
- 18** **exquisite** : acute ; used both of pleasure and pain. Distinguish this use of the word from another where it means 'of great beauty or excellence.'
gambolling : playing and jumping about.
- 20** **carolled on high** : sang in the sky.
instinct with life : imbued or charged with life ; much alive.
Many a time : mark the phrases beginning with 'many a.'
 'Many a' is *plural* in sense but singular in grammar ; so that the noun that follows it is *always singular*.

*Page***21** **nurtured** : brought up.**of a rougher grain** : of a nature not so sensitive or delicate.**23** **mayor** : the Head of a municipal corporation.

Exercises

1. Describe the character of the sexton.
2. Was the sexton carried away by the goblins? Or could you explain his experiences in some other way? Give reasons for your answer.
3. What is the moral of the story?
4. Use the following:
off duty; consort with; gall and wormwood; many a;
reach to; in lieu of.

3. BRET HARTE (1839—1902)

Miggles

Biographical Sketch

Bret Harte was born in 1839. He was about 18 years old when he went to California. Here he worked as an express messenger, a druggist's clerk, a school teacher, and a printer, but he gave up these jobs for one reason or another. However, California rewarded him in another way. The scenes and persons of California provided him rich material for his stories. It was a world full of stirring events and rough persons. We meet them in Harte's stories described as he saw them through his vivid and creative imagination. Harte taught how to write a short story full of local colour. In spite of their violence and exaggeration, his stories have a core of reality. For all this he became a leader of American fiction. He died in 1902.

Principal Works

The Luck of Roaring Camp; The Outcasts of Poker Flat; How Santa Claus Came to Simpson's Bar; Wan Lee; The Pagan; The Idyll of Red Gulch.

Notes

Page

- 24 **colloquy** : conversation ; mutual discourse.
adjuration : serious and solemn command.
rock of refuge : Miggles was their only hope of shelter and safety.
- 25 **answered categorically** : answered in simple and straight language.
supplemental : supplementary.
skunk : a low hateful fellow (vulgar).
- 26 **battered down the gate** : broke the gate by striking at it repeatedly.
- 27 **dern (or darn)** : (slang) damn.
Jury : a body of men appointed to assist a judge to inquire into and deliver judgment in civil and criminal cases.
- 28 **shanty** : hut ; a mean dwelling.
speechless discomfiture : inexpressible confusion.
lets me out : betrays me.
- 29 **like Caliban in bearing logs for this Miranda** : Miranda and Caliban are characters in Shakespeare's *Tempest*. Miranda is the charming daughter of Prospero, an exiled Duke living on a lonely island. Caliban is an ugly monster, far less human in form than an ape. He is employed like a slave to fetch wood for Miranda. In the same way the ugly Yuba Bill carries wood for the beautiful Miggles.
- 30 **extemporised** : made in an offhand manner with unsuitable or scanty material.
culinary : relating to cooking.
- 31 **Ursa Minor** : The Little Bear ; a group of stars including the North Pole and the North Star ; the stars form the shape of a bear.
Una and her lion : Una, Goddess of Truth, so called because truth is one. She starts with St. George on an adventure, but is separated from him by a storm. In her search for him she is looked after by a lion. So, the Judge says, Miggles is attended by the bear.
Turn in : (colloquial) go to bed.

- Page*
- 33 could get the hang——yer : could understand or get the knack of things here.
- 34 you are a trump : (colloquial) you are an excellent person.
ranch : a cattle-breeding establishment in the United States of America.
- 36 here's to Miggles : Let us drink to Miggles' health. It is a Western way of showing regard for a person.

Exercises

1. Why did the women passengers not join the men in admiring Miggles ?
2. Describe the character of Miggles.
3. What strikes you most in Miggles' character ?
4. Use the following :
out of breath ; let out ; flash upon ; get the hang of ; no end of.
5. Distinguish between :
Ingenuous and Ingenious.

4. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON (1850—1894)

The Bottle Imp

Biographical Sketch

Robert¹Louis Stevenson was born at Edinburgh in November 1850. At school he was an indifferent student. He was always fond of playing the truant. This gipsy spirit remained with him throughout life.

Stevenson's style is said to be artificial, but it has its own peculiar charm. It is lucid, strong and graphic.

In the last quarter of the 19th century when the realistic novel was in fashion, he revived the spirit of romance and adventure. Some of his best works are to be found in his shorter stories. His essays, containing as they do a sweet and wise philosophy of life, and gentle moralisings, have an attraction all their own.

Stevenson's health was always bad. He had lung trouble. He travelled far and wide in search of health. He settled in Samoa, an island in the Pacific Ocean. Here one evening in 1894, while he was merrily talking to his wife, he suddenly sank down and died.

Principal Works

The New Arabian Nights ; Treasure Island ; Kidnapped ;
The Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde ; The Master of Ballantrae ;
Familiar Studies of Men and Books ; Memories and Portraits.

Notes

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- 39 **at the word uttered** : for the asking ; as soon as he asks for anything.
and no mistake : without any manner of doubt ; undoubtedly.
- 40 **cry off** : withdraw from a bargain.
- 41 **hold on** : (colloquial) stop.
- 43 **with my mind's eye** : in my imagination.
- 44 **knick-knacks** : ordinary small articles meant more for ornament than for use.
whether or no : in any case.
- 46 **turned to stone** : became motionless (on account of fear) like a statue.
- 47 **drew rein** : pulled the reins of the horse ; stopped the horse.
- 48 **as bold as brass** : was too forward.
- 49 **lichen** : (Kaeë) a kind of plant or fungus usually of green or grey colour growing on or colouring rocks or tree trunks.
he was fallen in : he had contracted (by chance).
the Chinese Evil : leprosy.
- 50 **a Haole** : a white man.
- 52 **the hair shedding from his head** : his hair was untidy and dishevelled.
- 53 **the words died upon Keawe's tongue** : he was so much shocked and depressed that he could find no word to express himself.
- 63 **belaying-pin** : a strong fixed wooden or iron pin round which ropes are belayed (coiled) to make them fast.
- 64 **cat's-paw** : a person used as a tool by another.
fish for another : search or hunt for another bottle.
a flat : a dull or lifeless person.

Exercises

1. Describe the character of Keawe and Kókua.
2. What do you like most in the character of Keawe?
3. Did Keawe get the house in a supernatural way? Did the Bottle Imp play any effective part in his getting the house?
4. Compare the story of the Bottle Imp with that of Allah Din and His Lamp.
5. Use the following:
make out; fish for; and no mistake; out of the way;
cat's-paw; cry off; whether or no; keep an eye on; as
bold as brass; a foul mouth; saddled with; ill at ease.

5. GEORGE GISSING (1857—1903)

Christopherson

Biographical Sketch

George Gissing was born in Wakefield in 1857. His life started under appalling conditions. He lived in cellars and garrets. He could not afford more than sixpence for a meal. For a time he worked as a clerk in Liverpool. He half-starved in America. Life was always full of worrying problems for him.

He was a genuine literary artist. Not even the sternest poverty could compel him to write below his best. His books reflect the painful experiences of a writer, for whom life was one continuous struggle. He died in Spain in 1903.

Principal Works

The Odd Women; New Grub Street; Born in Exile; The Nether World; By the Ionian Sea; The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.

Notes

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66 rheumy eye: watery eye.

67 the black day: the hateful unlucky day (when the business failed).

Page

- 71** countenance fell: he became depressed.
 he turned upon me a woebegone eye: he gave me a sad
 dismal look.
- 72** punch: strike with closed fist.
- 74** potter over the books: trifle away his time over the books.
 rum: (slang) strange; queer.
- 76** riled: (slang) irritated.
 bibliophile: book-lover.
- 79** fidgeted about: moved about restlessly.

Exercises

1. Describe the character of Christopherson and of his wife.
2. State the effect the story produces upon you.
3. Use the following:
 look over; well off; potter over; out of reach; fidget
 about.

6. HERBERT GEORGE WELLS (1866—1946)**The Stolen Bacillus****Biographical Sketch**

H. G. Wells was born on September 21, 1866, at Bromley in Kent. He belonged to the lower middle class, and never forgot his origins. His father, Joseph Wells, had been a gardener, who turned small shopkeeper, and finally was a professional cricketer. His mother, Sarah, had been a lady's maid and later was a house-keeper in a country house. At the age of thirteen, Wells worked as an apprentice at a chemist's shop, and later was in turn a pupil teacher, a clerk in a drug store, a student assistant at a grammar school, and again a store clerk. Finally he went to study under the famous scientist, Huxley, and took his B.Sc. degree with honours at London University in 1888.

Wells may be said to have three separate careers. He began as a biologist, switched to journalism and then to literature, and

finally turned a prophet, talking of "the shape of things to come." He was one of the most prolific of the modern literary writers. In his own words "he is a liberal democrat, who claims an unlimited right to think, criticise, discuss, and suggest." Since the beginning of the World War II he became a pessimist, seeing the defeat of everything he fought for all his life.

With his death on the 14th August, 1946, passed away one of the two Grand Old Men of the contemporary English literature—the other is George Bernard Shaw, the great dramatist.

Principal Works

The Time Machine; The Stolen Bacillus and Other Stories; The Invisible Man; Twelve Stories and a Dream; Kipps; The War in the Air; The History of Mr. Polly; The Shape of Things to Come: You Can't Be Too Careful; A Sample of Life 1901—51; The Outline of History; Science of Life.

Notes

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85 **bacillus**: (plural: bacilli) microscopic vegetable organism found in diseased tissues.

Bacteriologist: a scientist who studies the life history of bacteria.

stained: filled with colouring matter for microscopic examination.

86 **cultivation**: bacteria artificially developed for scientific study.

Bacteria: (singular: bacterium) microscopic rod-shaped organisms found in impure rotten liquids.

87 **ring in**: encompass.

decimated: destroyed tenth or large proportion of.

Anarchist: one who advocates lawlessness and disorder.

88 **ethnology**: science of races and their relations to one another.

Teutonic: belonging to the German races.

Latin: Roman race.

89 **ostler**: stable man.

90 **what a lark**: how amusing.

Exercises

1. Why did the Anarchist go to the Bacteriologist? Did he succeed in his purpose?
2. Explain the humour contained in the story.
3. Complete the conversation implied in : "Put on my coat on this hot day! Why? Because we might meet Mrs. Jabber. My dear, Mrs. Jabber is not a draught. But why should I wear my coat on a hot day because of Mrs.....oh! *very* well."
4. Use the following:
peer down; out of focus; ring in; gloat on; strain out;
sneer at; dawn upon.

7. ARNOLD BENNETT (1867—1931)

Death, Fire and Life

Biographical Sketch

Arnold Bennett was born in 1867. He started life without much formal education. For a short time he was employed in a lawyer's office, which he abandoned for a literary career. By his hard work and burning desire to excel, he made a name for himself. He is a fine literary craftsman. His descriptions, though minute, are always interesting. He enjoys describing success. He is a versatile writer. He has written novels, short stories, essays, plays, and books of criticism and travel. He died in 1931.

Principal Works

The Old Wives' Tale; Clayhanger; Hilda Lessways; The Card; Things That Have Interested Me; Books and Persons; The Great Adventure (Play); How to Live on Twenty-four Hours a Day.

Notes

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95 had married beneath her: he thought she had married a person of a rank and status lower than that of her family.

lean months: months of want and poverty.

96 twitted: reproached; taunted.

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- 97 **cured fish**: fish preserved by drying and salting.
the fiat: from Latin, meaning 'let it be done'; order.
- 98 **the Five Towns**: the five most important towns in the English pottery district in Staffordshire.
have something up his sleeve: have something concealed but ready for urgent or immediate use.
- 99 **snack**: a slight or hurried meal.
cheek: side of the door.
- 100 **fend for**: support himself; provide for himself.
- 101 **cut the thing too fine**: to overdo a thing.
the elite: (French) the best; the flower; as, the elite of society.
- 103 **fal-lals**: useless or showy ornaments and decorations.
- 104 **to be done in the eye**: to be cheated.
St. Sebastian: A martyr Christian saint who was bound to a tree and shot at with so many arrows that they stuck in his body as prints in a pin-cushion.
- 105 **the facade**: the front of a building.
- 106 **delinquent**: one who commits a fault or a crime; a culprit.
- 108 **new-fangled**: a novel or strange thing (used in bad sense).
- 110 **duck**: a term of endearment; darling.
Wesleyan: a follower of John Wesley (1703—91), founder of Wesleyan Methodists.
- 111 **Pull yourself together**: collect your faculties; regain your self-possession.
wench: a girl or young woman.

Exercises

1. Describe Mr. Curtenty's character.
2. Why did Mr. Curtenty not know anything *officially* about the help given by his son-in-law?
3. In Mr. Salter's shop why did Mr. Curtenty's tongue cleave to his palate and his throat grow parched? Did he really want to commit suicide?
4. Use the following:
 Look in the face; count against; to have up one's sleeve; work out; cut it too fine; look out; pull oneself together.

8. EDWARD VERRAL LUCAS (1868—1938)

The Dinner Party

Biographical Sketch

Edward Verral Lucas was born on June 26, 1868, at Kent, not far from London. He was brought up at Brighton, and attended as many as eleven schools. At the age of sixteen he was appointed an apprentice to a bookseller. Later, however, through the help of a relative, he studied at the University College, London.

He was a very prolific and versatile writer. He was also a great anthologist. He worked on the staff of various papers, including the famous *Punch*. He will be best remembered for his work on Charles Lamb, and for his charming essays. He also wrote about a dozen novels, travel books, and a series of comic skits like the one selected here.

He was a hard worker all his life. He moved in a wide social and literary circle. He liked good living. He was happy over his success, but he was not spoiled by it. He died at seventy.

Principal Works

Old Lamps for New; Adventures and Enthusiasms; You Know What People Are; A Rower I Would Be; A Wanderer in London; Roving East and Roving West; The Life of Charles Lamb.

Notes

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112 **A Radical**: a politician who wants to introduce fundamental and extreme reforms in his country.

firebrand: a person who inflames factions or causes mischief.

Mr. Dickens: Charles Dickens, a great novelist of the 19th century.

Mr. Thackeray: William Makepeace Thackeray, a great novelist, a contemporary of Dickens.

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made a false move : gave a wrong turn to her talk, *i.e.*, she said something which she should not have said.

113 Greater London : the vast new areas joined to the old town of London.

Boz : A pseudonym under which Dickens contributed a series of "Sketches of Life and Character" to the London *Morning Chronicle*. Dickens relates : "Boz, my signature in the *Morning Chronicle*, was the nickname of a younger brother, whom I had dubbed Moses, in honour of Goldsmith's 'The Vicar of Wakefield,' which pronounced through the nose became Boses, and being shortened Boz."

seemed all nerves : was vigorous, energetic, well strung.

114 douceur (doozeer) : bribe.

conversazione : soiree (evening or social gathering) given by a learned or art society.

115 marital : pertaining to marriage.

sententiously : briefly ; pithily.

when in a tight place : when she is in a difficult position.

turned scarlet : his face turned red (on account of excessive shyness or sensitiveness).

ruse : trick or deception (regarding her pretended deafness).

117 a reprieved assassin : a murderer whose execution has been suspended.

Exercises

1. Describe the character of old Mrs. Wynne.
2. Is it only the old people who are so snobbish, opinionated, and boring ? Analyse any of your young friends to see if there is nothing common between him and the old Mrs. Wynne.
3. Use the following :—
hit it off ; give way for the life of me ; in a tight place.

9. GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON (1874—1936)

The Invisible Man

Biographical Sketch

Gilbert Keith Chesterton was born on the 29th May, 1874, at Campden Hill, London. At school he did not win any distinction, and was even regarded as a sleepy boy. He took no degree, but the years he spent at home in a family devoted to art and letters, developed his talent. Before he was twenty-one, he was well launched on a journalistic and literary career.

He wrote reviews, criticisms, and essays for the various English journals. He also wrote a series of books on religion, politics, biography, and history, showing great energy and versatility. **Father Brown**, whom you meet in the story selected here, is one of the most liked characters in modern fiction, and his creation has raised the standard of the detective story.

Chesterton was a man of huge bulk, and this with his untidy hair made him a target for the caricaturist. He was a splendid after-dinner speaker. He was well known for his personal kindness, love of liberty, and gift of style. He died on the 14th June, 1936.

Principal Works

The Napoleon of Notting Hill; The Innocence of Father Brown; The Wisdom of Father Brown; The Incredibility of Father Brown; The Secret of Father Brown; The Man Who Knew Too Much; and Other Stories.

Notes

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119 rainbow provocations: attractions of many colours; many coloured sweetmeats.

121 freaks: abnormal persons.

I made up some gas: (gas: empty, boastful talk) I put forward an empty and boastful excuse.

122 hoardings: boards used for posting bills.

123 he has fallen on his feet: he has had marked good luck.
he is done for: he is destroyed or dead.

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- 124 rum** : (slang) strange ; queer.
- 126 quack** : an ignorant pretender who offers wonderful remedies or devices ; a charlatan.
- 127 commissioner** : a person employed as a messenger.
- 129 jumpy** : exciting ; shocking.
- green** : inexperienced.
- 132 it is more in your department than mine** : the way Smythe has been murdered is supernatural ; and so a priest rather than a detective can solve the mystery.
- 133 prosy** : commonplace ; dull.
- 134 get-up** : appearance.
- 135 had ducked** : he bent down his head quickly.

Exercises

1. Describe the character of Father Brown.
2. What do you understand by "a mentally invisible man?"
3. Describe the character of James Welkin.
4. Use the following :
hold your tongue ; make up gas ; is done for ; keep count of ; out of place ; get-up ; fall on one's feet.

10. ALFRED EDGAR COPPARD (1878—)**The Good Samaritans****Biographical Sketch**

Alfred Edgar Coppard was born at Kent on the 4th of January, 1878. He is the son of a tailor and a house-maid. He had some schooling at a Board School until the age of nine. Circumstances now forced him to follow all sorts of occupations, and at last he settled down as a clerk and accountant. He, however, continued his self-education by constant study. He was particularly fond of poetry. He found leisure also to grow into a first-class athlete.

In 1907 he went to Oxford as accountant to an engineering firm. Here he found a congenial atmosphere, and began writing short stories. He had small success ; still he decided to give up

his job and devote all his time to writing. He had to bear extreme poverty, but he struggled on till he succeeded.

According to Coppard folk tales are the best models for a story writer. He loves the simple and straightforward in writing and in life. He is primarily a poet. His prose stories also have the peculiar quality of lyric poetry.

Principal Works

The Field of Mustard; Pink Furniture; Dunky Fitlow; Ninepenny Flute; You Never Know, Do You?; Collected Poems.

Notes

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136 Good Samaritans: (Ref. St. Luke's Gospel) genuinely charitable persons. A Samaritan is a native of Samaria in Palestine.

were at logger heads again: quarrelled again.

the firmament caved in: the sky subsided or decreased in size (on account of fear of their anger).

dilettanti: (singular; dilettante) lovers of fine arts.

the metropolis: London (metropolis: the capital of a country).

Rugby: a famous school in England.

137 defunct: dead.

putting the young.....feet: help him earn his living.

keep him out of the gutter: save him from poverty and starvation.

protege: a person to whom another is a protector or patron.

138 cooped up: confined.

a jackanapes: a monkey.

a clout: a knock over the head with knuckles.

the bottomless pit: hell.

what are you kicking up all this dust for? : why are you creating all this fuss?

140 bob: (slang) shilling.

glowering: frowning; scowling.

throw him out: dismiss him from service.

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- 141 mass of verbiage**: letter full of needless words.
noodle: fool; simpleton.
in sackcloth and ashes: with humble expression of repentance.
- 142 to be gored and maimed**: to be wounded and crippled; attacked and insulted.
- 143 out with it**: speak out plainly.
- 144 nullity of being**: nonentities; worthless fellows.

Exercises

1. Describe the character of Godley and Tollright.
2. To which weakness of human nature is the author referring in the story? Could you illustrate it from your own experience?
3. Use the following:
 put on his feet; keep out of gutter; kick up dust; lift or stir a finger; at home; cave in.

11. KATHERINE MANSFIELD (1888—1923)**The Doll's House****Biographical Sketch**

Katherine Mansfield was born on October 14, 1888, at Wellington, New Zealand. She had the common schooling of country children. In 1903 she was sent to Queen's College, London. After her college education she did not like to settle in New Zealand, and at last succeeded in persuading her father, Harold Beauchamp, to send her back to London.

Now starts an unhappy chapter of her life, which closed only with her early death on January 9, 1923. Ill-health and ill-success doggedly followed her all her life. The only happy episode of her life was her meeting John Middleton Murry, the critic. They married in 1918.

From her childhood she showed a marked literary bent. She was barely nine, when she started writing stories. She had the common ill-luck of young writers, and had to struggle long for recognition. It was only in 1920 that the publication of *Bliss and Other Stories* brought her real reputation.

Principal Works

Bliss and Other Stories; The Garden Party; The Dove's Nest; Something Childish; Selected Stories; Journal (Autobiography); Letters.

Notes

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- 146** **spinach**: p^álák ká ság.
picked out with: adorned or beautified with.
prised it open: forced it open.
- 147** **a dresser**: kitchen sideboard.
- 148** **was bossy**: behaved or acted like a boss or a master.
trapesing: tramp or go about carelessly.
whip off: take off quickly.
to beam flatteringly: to smile in a flattering manner.
- 149** **set the fashion**: the other girls followed the example of the Burnells.
spry: active.
- 150** **wishbone of a child**: a lean bony child (wishbone is the forked bone in front of the breastbone in most birds).
teeny: tiny.
wasn't making half enough of the little lamp: was not sufficiently praising the lamp.
- 151** **the rage**: the object of widespread temporary enthusiasm or interest.
johnny cake: cake of maize-meal or wheat-meal.
- 152** **made eyes at**: looked lovingly or amorously at.
a sell: (slang) a disappointment.
- 153** **thieved out**: quietly or stealthily went out.
- 154** **what a start they gave**: they were frightened.
- 155** **hay paddocks**: small fields of hay.
wattle: a fence made of interlaced rods or twigs.

Exercises

1. What effect does the story produce on you? Does it remind you of anything in our own country?

2. What is the real significance of :

(i)but she was always right.

(ii) Not to stay to tea, of course, or to come trapesing through the house.

(iii) Very nice company for other people's children !

(iv) A bunch of dreadfully common-looking flowers.

(v) This was such a marvellous thing.....wild with joy.

3. Use the following :

make up for ; press up : make a sensation ; the rage ; a sell.

12. KAREL CAPEK (CHOP'-EK) (1890—1938)

The Fortune-Teller

Biographical Sketch

Karel Capek was born in 1890 in Bohemia. He was educated first at the University of Prague, and later in Berlin and Paris.

Quite early in life he became associated with the leading politicians of his country. After the first World War (1914—18) when the Versailles Treaty created the new state of Czechoslovakia, he threw himself whole-heartedly into the struggle to build up a real democratic state. He also laboured hard to effect reconciliation with the Sudeten Germans. But all his attempts bore little fruit. His dreams and his heart broke together. After the Munich Conference he seemed to lose interest in life, and fell an easy prey to pneumonia in December 1938. In a way he wrote his own obituary when he said : "A short life is better for mankind, for a long life would deprive man of his optimism."

He is a great novelist, dramatist, and essayist. He was influenced by the American and English ways of thought. He was also a leader of the modern theatre in Czechoslovakia.

Principal Works

R. U. R. ; The Power and the Glory ; Money and Other Stories ; Tales From Two Pockets ; President Masaryk Tells His Story ; Masaryk on Thought and Life.

Notes

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156 **the letter of the law**: strict verbal or literal meaning and form of the law, and not its real object or purport.

statute-book: a book containing the laws enacted by a Government or a legislative body.

charwoman: woman hired by the day for house-work.

157 **a blind for something else**: (fortune-telling) may be only serving as a cover for some serious or bad work she may be doing.

espionage: acting as an enemy's spy.

158 **to get in your way**: to act as an obstacle or to interfere in your affairs.

and no mistake: undoubtedly. (It is used to emphasise a previous statement.)

159 **the cards cannot be bribed**: you cannot change your fate indicated by the cards by paying more money than the due fee.

Scotland Yard: a short street off Whitehall in London. Until 1890 it was the headquarters of London Police, now located at New Scotland Yard on the River Thames' embankment. So it means the London Police, especially its detective department.

worms things out: draws out secrets from the people by cunning methods.

in good sooth: really; truly.

161 **bamboozle**: (slang) confuse; cheat.

162 **powers vested in them**: powers given to them by law or Government.

looked very glum: looked very dejected and sullen.

you don't say so: you do not really mean it.

whipper-snapper: a young and unimportant but proud and meddlesome person.

went crazy about her: fell madly in love with her.

Exercises

1. Is Capek criticising or supporting fortune-telling ^{Give} reasons for your answer.
2. Explain the irony in the story.
3. What is the object of Capek in showing that ^{the Judge]} who tries Mrs. Myers is also well-versed in ^{fortune-}reading?
4. Use the following :
 well off ; dress up ; make out ; put away ^{worm out ; get}
 to the bottom.



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